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SELF-CULTIVATION.

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SELF-CULTIVATION

RECOMMENDED;

OR,

HINTS TO A YOUTH

LEAVING SCHOOL.

By ISAAC TAYLOR,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

AT ONGAR.

**"Hear ye children the instruction of a father :
Attend to know understanding."——Solomon.**

FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

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CONTENTS.

	Page.
PREFACE - - - - -	vii
 CHAP. I. On the purport of Education to fit us for our Stations in Life - - - - -	1
 II. On the different Sources of Instruction - -	9
 III. On the period of leaving School as best suited to real Education - - - - -	29
 IV. On the importance of Self-Cultivation - -	51
 V. On the various Objects of Self-Cultivation	89
 VI. On using our Talents - - - - -	110
 VII. Self-Cultivation may hope for Divine Bless- ing - - - - -	149

PREFACE.

It may prevent misapprehension in the reader, and consequent disappointment, to state distinctly the object of the present volume. It is not an attempt to depreciate the instruction which schools are intended to give ; nor by any means to institute a mode of self-tuition, which shall render them needless. The *self-cultivation* recommended, is rather intended to *render them complete*.

It is a very common mistake, which the author has found extremely detrimental to youthful improvement ;—that masters are

to teach their pupils ; and that the whole burden of education lies on the tutor. That the thoughtless, volatile young, should take up such a notion, is no wonder : but the manner in which many teachers operate, seems to intimate that they also make the same mistake ; for all their teaching is *telling* ; substituting the means for the end. That teaching is alone efficient which is connected with *doing*. The pupil must not be a mere recipient, a listener ; but an actor, if he would even comprehend the lesson ; if especially he would make that morsel of knowledge his own.

This mistake is not, however, the exact object of this address ; but rather, one consequent upon it : which is, *that when a child leaves school, his education is finished*. A

notion destructive of all real improvement ; which steals from the mind almost all it had gained ; and as it prevails totally or partially, prevents so far, all future improvement, all actual excellence.

That such an idea does obtain, is perhaps within the recollection of most of us ; lies under our observation, as far as the young surround us ; and becomes the main obstacle to our wishes for their improvement, wherever their improvement is connected with our own labour, anxiety, and comfort.

To prove, therefore, to the young, that their education is not finished, but only begun when they quit school ; that all their hopes for honourable excellence must rest on their own exertions ; that

now, especially, their exertions promise successful issue ; to rouse the noble determination of acting well : of putting forth mental energies on principle : this forms the single object of the following pages.

If those who are still under tuition, should peruse the work, and imbibe the spirit of it, it is hoped their present opportunities may be made more advantageous : but, put into the hands of such as have just left their tutors ; should it engage them to become tutors to themselves, it is presumed then its application is more appropriate, and its beneficial effects may be hoped for to their greatest extent.

With this hope it is, that SELF-CULTIVATION has been placed in a variety of

lights, and its importance and efficiency delineated. To generate the principle is the first object. Should this endeavour be favourably received, some of the means most likely to guide in the process, may be developed in a future volume.

May the present appeal forcibly impress the importance of the enterprize ; the important enterprize will then be begun ; and much may be hoped from its progress during life :—its completion must be watched for in another world.

Ongar, April, 1818.

1

SELF-CULTIVATION.

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

**ON THE PURPORT OF EDUCATION, TO FIT US FOR
OUR STATIONS IN LIFE.**

To learn A B C is felt extremely irksome by the infant, who cannot comprehend what it is for. The boy, forced to school, cons over his dull lesson because he must ; but feels no amusement or satisfaction in it. The labour he is obliged to undergo is not small ; the privations of activity and pleasure he regrets still more ; and all for what ?—to learn what he does not like ; to force into his mind words to which he attaches no ideas, or ideas which to him appear to be of no value : he cannot put them to any present use. Youth is not aware, that not for present use is all this designed, but to qualify for future operations. The dull, laborious, but necessa-

ry routine, like the ploughing and sowing the land, is in hopes of reaping abundance, pleasure, and profit, at some not very distant season. Education is not the end, but only the means.

Let us then see what is the object it has in view. A person growing to a certain age must appear in the world ; he can no longer hide himself at school, nor withdraw behind the routine of the trammels appointed for his minority. He must start forward, and become something. What that something is to be, education only can surmise ; even talent, genius, fortune, can give little guess. The training forms even all these, if judiciously conducted ; and if otherwise, all these will fail, in most cases, of attaining the wished-for object. A man must act : whether he is necessitated to labour for his maintenance ; or is freed by fortune from all apprehension and from all constrained exertion, yet he must act. It is the intent of education to enable him to act rightly, honourably, successfully. Without pretension to prophetic powers, one may safely say, a man, coming into life, will, in some way or other, perhaps in various shapes of sorrow, he will, he must

suffer. Youth may fancy life one scene of gaiety ; but reality and fancy differ widely. If education has been rightly conducted, it will teach the man how to suffer with dignity, with honour,—nay, with profit.

The man launches into life, and will be exactly, or very nearly, what his actual education purposed. 'Tis well, when guided, stored, and stimulated, the youth starts forward, and in manhood prospers ; answers his own wishes, his parents' expectations, his tutors' labours, by actual success in his station, whatever it may be. The dreary hours of learning will then be recollected with pleasure, and the labour will be abundantly repaid. The end which education had in view will be attained, and its importance fully acknowledged. The alternative will show this importance in a still clearer light. The man, forced into action, obliged to take perhaps some prominent station, may fail to fill it properly ; may fail, notwithstanding the best endeavours, and become unsuccessful in all his pursuits. To fail for want of learning what education would have taught him, would be great disgrace :

but to fail when conscious of talents exerted, and carefulness ever active, will take away from the man's own mind, and from the opinion of by-standers, all that is disgraceful; he may even gain honour, though he fails, by the exertions made to prevent, or by the disposition shown during the deep adversity. The lessons of education may be as useful to him in this case as in the other. All that he has learned will help him in some shape, and the labour once endured will, even in his sorrowing moments, yield him assistance, satisfaction,—perhaps tranquillizing peace and joy.

If the object of education is thus important, if the effects of it are so strong, so enduring, it is worth all the labour and privation which it necessarily occasions. And let it be recollected, that however these terms may apply to that instruction which is forced upon us by others, they hardly obtain when the mind begins to act for itself. When self-cultivation begins to operate, every toil becomes a pleasure, and the grand object is attained, with the delight arising from successful endeavour.

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We shall see the importance of education, if we glance at the mode in which it prepares the mind for this entrance into life, and steady conduct through it. It is a new world which is opened to the blind, when their sight is gained. The mental eye, too, is but dull in its perception, and confined in its sphere of action, till education enlarges the faculties, and presents new and delightful objects to the inquisitive mind : storing the memory, the imagination, the judgment, with a rich variety of knowledge ; and guiding to such principles of discrimination as may make the whole of use. How well fitted for the various occupations of life is such a cultivated intellect !

Not less important are those principles of action which well informed intelligence alone is likely to discern, to value, and to retain. Principle gives regularity, steadiness, certainty, to the mind, in all its feelings and operations. It is then enabled to select wisely, to determine promptly, and to act with honour and effect. It is the compass which guides the mariner in safety, through the day-light or the darkness : so is the mind prepared for every

occurrence, when principles sound and honourable, have been instilled by education.

Of how much use in after life are habits of right action : the constant training may be irksome, but the effect once fastened on the mind, becomes the means of conduct steady, just, and appropriate, in future days. The very habits of regularity which necessarily obtain in careful tuition, are of great importance. Useless as is desultory exertion, and hurtful indeed to the mind, so important and beneficial is the habit of orderly and reiterated performance of every duty in its proper time and place. Regularity is the life of business ; let that be the occupations of commerce, of professional study or only of affluent amusement.

Scarcely is it possible that a course of education should not have some influence in training the passions, those sources of pleasure or of torment, all through life. They will be curbed in their violence ;—happy effect ! they will be trained to proper action ;—what a source of comfort to a man's self, and to all around him ! The

main source of the miseries of human life is ungoverned passions. The real evils of our situation would be few, and not often poignant, but we exasperate them by our own folly and wilfulness. If education brings these unruly principles into any orderly action, it is preparing the youth to assume manhood with great advantage.

Great is the object which education has in view ; and important are the means employed to attain it. Let this object, then, be contemplated in its real excellence, and let these means be regarded according to their intrinsic value, and it will be found that education is beyond all conception worthy our care, and well repays whatever it may cost us. So are we fitted for acting our part ; if successfully, with reputation and honour ; and if unsuccessfully, with safety to conscience, with satisfaction, and benefit. What shall we grudge to obtain such advantages ; how shall we steer our course in life without such assistance ?

Whatever be the honourable object, and actual effect, and enduring usefulness

of education, that education which is most efficient will be most worthy our esteem and cultivation. Self-instruction, self-command, self-acting energy, will be absolutely necessary to render the best education effective, and will carry every advantage to its highest degree. Let the mind contemplate the object aimed at; let it grasp at every assistance which seems likely to help in the attainment; let it cultivate all its powers; guide itself by fixed principles; select carefully its honourable end, and pursue it with earnestness:—this is self-cultivation, and promises well to repay all the toil it occasions, by steady usefulness, and respectable rank in society.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE DIFFERENT SOURCES OF INSTRUCTION.

WHERE did you learn this ? is a question sometimes not easy to be answered. The true reply, if given, would point out sources of instruction which we had never considered as such. Perhaps the most important principles of action, the most efficient rules, and motives, and habits, if rightly traced, will show, that not in one school, but in several, we have taken our degrees ; not from ostensible masters, but by gratuitous instruction ; not from a parent's care, but by some servant's villany, we became thus knowing. To be aware beforehand, how such knowledge may be obtained or avoided will have its use.

Much of course may be attributed to the direct instruction received from masters, and schools, and the various tasks set us in them. So much given to be learned

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by rote, and that every day, must leave some traces of knowledge on the dullest mind. As the memory of children seems peculiarly retentive, it is a benefit to have had is stored with ideas, if they are but tolerably good and appropriate. Yet want of interest in the instruction given, occasions great inattention to it, and absurd misapprehension concerning it. It will be well if any thing remains sufficiently correct and impressive to become of actual service in life. Unless self-cultivation be early begun, which may seize, correct, and fix such floating notions, the chance is much against their permanency and effective usefulness.

Learning by rote is likely to be more useful, when the tutor has skill, patience, and fatherly feeling enough to engage him to add personal explanation and examination. Difficulties are sometimes cleared by a word. The truth is pointed out, and its importance impressed, by a single question, an inquisitive look, or a marked emphasis ; while the kindness with which such a mode implies will engage attention, and thereby rouse the youth's own powers :—the principle most important to

success. Very favourable have been their opportunities, who, beyond the daily routine of tasks and duties, have enjoyed the *viva voce* lessons of an elegant mind, devoted to the labour of education, and stimulated by every symptom of success. If, indeed, vacant inattention, or the spirit of hardened obstinacy, ruled over those precious moments, the lessons, however excellent, could make but little impression; and should the same disposition remain, that self-cultivation should be roused to operate on such instruction can scarcely be expected.

In many cases, the instruction given at schools has been premature. Not all children of the same age, or the same standing, are equally forward: and if all are expected to receive the same specific lesson, the effect cannot be beneficial. All instruction requires some previous knowledge to receive it. If the lesson be given, therefore, before the mind is sufficiently opened to comprehend its meaning, it will not be received. The whole will be lost; or the part retained, for want of its corresponding parts, will become an absurd and useless notion.

Will it be any wonder, then, if all the time and expense bestowed on schools and masters, produce but a small stock of knowledge :—if the parent be eventually disappointed, by the little attainment made ; and the scholar disappointed too, in feeling himself not competent for the situations he is called to occupy. Perhaps he leaves his tutors with a rooted aversion against them, and against all knowledge : an aversion which cleaves to him through life, and grows with every experience of inability. Not able to rise to the various occasions before him, he fixes himself, with a sort of valiant obstinacy, in some redoubt of ignorance ; and affects to laugh at all who strive after an excellence which he is now determined never to aim at. A lost character this. Intellectuality is frozen up. The mind dozes and snores ; or, if at all roused, it is to set itself a-kimbo against instruction, and finally to resist and resent every attempt to communicate useful or honourable emulation.

In spite of every reluctance during the years of school, and although much time was lost in things which are not effective-

ly learned, or which, if learned, would never have been actually of use ; yet will small remnants and shreds of knowledge be brought away. Something is forced into the most resisting mind by incessant endeavour : something seen or heard, or parrot-like learned by rote, retains its impression, and becomes perhaps the seed of increasing discernment. Should self-cultivation begin, however late, her necessary occupations, these trifles, mis-shapen, partial, and scanty as they are, will be of excellent use ; the mind, when it begins to operate, will work upon them, and, almost unconscious of where and how it came by such ideas, will find them, use them, and be set forwards by the means to much advantage.

Imperious circumstances, however, teach much more than masters do ; and forcing the attention, fix the knowledge so gained in a much more indelible manner. " I will" and " I won't," are favourite expressions with inconsiderate boys. While mere boys, disgraceful as are such expressions, they may pass : but the first step taken after school is over, meets with as positive and more powerful " You shall"

and "You sha'nt." Nothing remains, after a little ineffectual struggling, but a compromise. The doughty resolve is deferred in its execution ; becomes less and less frequently resorted to : a sort of compliance becomes habitual, and an artificial pliability is superinduced, upon some of the most obstinate. The lesson might have been more easily learned ; but as it must be learned, the sooner the better, whatever be the means.

The world is not so compliant as our fond parents ; it cares little for our feelings, less for our whims, and it will have its way. He who romps and tears about the parlour, as his own vagaries impel him, despising all rule and decency, must, if he come into the street, go with the crowd : after a little jostling, and shoving, and grumbling, he is obliged to mind whose toes he treads on ; whose sides he elbows ; he is forced to take care, or he will himself be cuffed and scoffed at, perhaps trampled under foot. No remonstrance could teach economy at one time ; but straits and difficulties force in the necessary art of calculation, the easy method of taking care and saving. Impatience is

constrained for its own sake to command itself, as the easiest, the only way, of preventing patience from being utterly worn out. Good manners, neglected so long, are courted now as the necessary passport to good company. Docility takes place of obstreperous resistance, as giving less trouble in circumstances which cannot be altered or avoided. It is well when something is found of sufficient power to force that mind which is unwilling to act : when desultory caprice is bound down to regularity ; when indolence is roused and stimulated to at least the usual routine of daily employment. Call the occasion hard, call the person an enemy : the occasion is excellent, the person befriends us much, by which we are brought into action, and such exertions are produced as may attain some useful object.

“ I should like to be this,”—“ I had rather be that,” says the unsettled, ineffective mind. What would be the result of such oscillation, if left without any sufficient impetus, but a total cessation of all action ? It is well when some irresistible circumstance arises, to say,—“ You shall be neither the one nor the other. Here

is a path opened before you ; walk in it." The caprice must be given up, the disliking overcome, the reluctant powers shall take the shape appointed, and must expand in the only way left them. Many a character is thus saved from ruin, by what was regarded as a destructive circumstance. Obligated to learn, learning in that mode became easy, and after a while even pleasant. The lessons are appropriate to the wants and situation, and their intrinsic value recommends them to adoption. The knowledge is indeed forced in, but its own usefulness makes it to be received with a welcome, and retained with pleasure.

When the eyes are thus imperiously constrained to one object, much that was thought true concerning happiness appears to be false ; and much that was despised as the dream of doting parents is found to be serious fact. Much which was felt unpleasant, by habit becomes bearable ; nay, beauties or advantages are discovered, to make it desirable every way. Employment shapes the mind, the temper is moulded by the circumstances, and the character is gradually formed, fixed, polished ; till the man ranks among his

species as decidedly something, as something honourable and eminent.

Weighty motives may have much influence, even where the necessity is not so imperious. To be swayed by proper motives is the characteristic of a rational creature. If a youth deserves so to be ranked, he will learn the lessons of wisdom, when presented in so suitable a mode. He puts off the boy, from the forcible persuasion that something more manly now becomes him. When a person sees what ought to be, what must be, all that is in him of propriety and steadiness, will incline him to accommodate his conduct to the demands of his situation. None but the inconsiderate will so far disregard their own welfare as to refuse to learn what becomes necessary to them. Soon is it discovered, that something must be settled upon, some line of life adopted; and the appropriate knowledge must be gained, the suitable habits formed. The mind turns into that channel; stores up the maxims found to be important, and begins to assume some honourable shape. The only means in a parent's power will

show the path which must be taken : the forcible necessity of considering a parent's comfort, or providing support, will bring all the affectionate feelings to bear upon the point, and induce the mind to take the proper resolution. Affection will make that smooth and easy, which in its nature may not be pleasant ; and will reward toil and suffering in a manner which will take off their bitterness. If by such motives the mind is actuated to choose, to follow, to labour, in some distinct and effective mode ; it is also trained by their operation to feel sensations the most conducive to happiness, and to act upon principles highly honourable to character. Even the effect of common custom is not small in forming character. Too powerful, indeed, is it in biasing the mind to evil, when the customs common are immoral. Where there is no pernicious tendency, this influence is as salutary as it is powerful. What others do, we feel to be attainable, to be necessary. Not to so the same, is in some degree disgraceful ; as it implies want of capacity, of steady application, or of regulating principle.

Motives such as these have great influence in pointing out what ought to be learned, and in engaging that attention which is needful to the attaining the necessary knowledge. One consideration of this nature will instruct the docile mind very powerfully ; will rouse it to fit itself for action ; to take the shape needful for the occasion ; to fix the prime attention on topics hitherto deemed dull, and to accustom to habits which the volatile call laborious. The mind is brought into exertion, the thing needed for real attainment ; it is impelled by a motive felt sufficient ; the activity takes a suitable direction. Its own acts are always gratifying ; what it gains by self-exertion, will appear to be valuable, will be felt to be important. And though some false estimates may occur, yet by degrees better ability is attained, real knowledge is stored up, traits of character are formed, and the man rises into view disburdened of the boy, and glowing with riper judgment and more honourable feelings.

That example teaches better than precept, is so obvious as to become an adage. Much is the character of the young influ-

enced, formed, exalted, or ruined, by such instruction. Could we distinctly trace them, many of our sentiments, and the points which form our character, would be found to have taken their rise from direct or unconscious imitation of those among whom we began to move. Happy is it for the young when the examples before their eyes are worthy of imitation ; when, especially, some one example of honourable and successful mental energy is near enough to be distinctly discerned and carefully studied. Powerful is such influence ; salutary in its effect, and highly useful in forming the emulative young to sentiments and habits of excellence. Some virtues seem almost beyond attainment : but if their actual existence is discerned, fostered, eminent, and shining, in some living characters, then indolence hardly durst say that the thing cannot be done. Honourable station, won as the reward of talent and useful exertion, will stimulate to similar endeavours ; and give an ardor which will not be discouraged, and which shall not be disappointed. That steady consistency of character which arises from fixed principles and powerful motives assumed into action, is often derived from

the accidental sight, but better still if from the constant contemplation of one whose success points out the road, and the means of similar advantages. Under the influence of such powerful instruction, ideas are roused and raised of great importance to future life : notions which only floated loose in the mind become fixed principles : virtuous dispositions are strengthened, and become able to resist the silly laugh of unthinking characters : and habits become established in a manner which may greatly support right conduct in difficult seasons.

It must not be forgotten, that strong as is the efficacy of example, it is not always good example which catches the attention, and influences the mind, and feelings, and habits of the young. To the ruin of many a fair prospect in life, of many a lovely character, as the first blossoms seemed to promise, pestiferous example, like a blight or mildew, has in one moment come across and destroyed all the fond hopes of the broken-hearted parents. It is baleful to a young mind to perceive that certain hateful crimes are possible ; that persons live in criminal indulgences, who never-

theless maintain a fair character, and are received into what is called good company. All familiarity with such immoralities, tends to take off that horror at sin, which unpractised minds find to be a considerable preservative against it. Slight compliances will now and then be yielded to; and when once this awful lesson is learned, who can say how deep a proficient in vice the tyro may become? By slow degrees, perhaps, but in a manner dreadfully certain, the best feelings are blunted, the better habits are broken in upon, the character soon becomes deteriorated. Principles are forgotten, checks of conscience no longer rise, or rise ineffectually. Insidious vice, which here and there penetrated and undermined principle, comes on some occasion as an inundation, and sweeps the whole mound away, or wears such a breach at least as permits continual damage. From being suffered, vice, under the fostering influence of example, becomes adopted; is heartily cultivated. The allurements which once filled with disgust, attract the now corrupted taste. Continued example leads to emulative viciousness, and with heroic boldness are the most desperate

schemes of atrocity brooded over, hatched, and brought into open day. How is the dreadful instruction imbibed? What no precept could have effected, is gradually produced by insinuating example; and where the influence does not take effect to such alarming degree, yet the evil produced is always something: something to be dreaded and guarded against with the utmost care, by such as watch with anxiety the powers which most effectually combine to form and to fix the growing character.

Possibly more than we are aware of, will the actual character receive its form and value from some accidental words, spoken with, and sometimes without, particular intention. The young mind feels their power, and acts ever after under their influence. A kiss of approbation, given by a fond mother, at sight of a juvenile drawing, done at stolen opportunities by West, when a child, fixed his growing inclination to the arts. "That kiss made me a painter," has he often said. One word of encouragement has frequently by inspiring hope, stimulated to the requisite exertions. A prognostication of future eminence has half occasioned its own ful-

filment, by setting the object full in view, and rousing the delighted imagination with the foretasted enjoyment of destined honours. A small success, in itself a trifle, shall, by being noticed and approved, so seem to place the greater success within reach, that the ardent mind feels as if a little more only ; and the whole will be obtained. This little more will indeed show the falsity of such hope, but it will also by nearer approximation increase the impetus, and eventually ensure the success. A sneer shall sometimes check, most unfortunately check, rising endeavour ; will give the timorous mind to fear it never can excel, or rouse the proud mind to determine, it will rather give up all than endure such sneer again, for endeavours which must be imperfect. Emulation is nipped in the bud, and perhaps never do the powers recover the benumbing effect of one foolish sarcasm. If indeed the sarcasm were directed against some folly, some attempt at unworthily excelling, becoming eminent in criminality ; then its influence is beneficial. There are those who have been saved from all the shameful pre-eminence of low buffoonery, by a contemptuous smile, or a serious hint of caution. Those

who think a single word can be of no avail, greatly mistake: it may give light and afford a clue, the only thing needed in some cases to direct exertion, and ensure success. It may cheer under present difficulties, and stimulate the rising mind to effective labours. Not the whip, but a mere chirrup, will encourage the generous steed to perseverance: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it! Those who are apt to speak words at random, without considering what may be the effect of a silly sentence, should take this hint; and be on their guard, lest they do irreparable mischief. And such as have only opportunity to drop a hint, or even dart a look of intelligence, may be encouraged to their tiny endeavours: a single seed may take root, and show at least its own excellence; perhaps become a store in future years.

By many ways, then, is the character expanded. By many ways is the mass of knowledge gained. There is scarcely any day passes without some impression, good or bad, being made. Some seed sown, which in future life shall spring up: well if it be the principal wheat. But

how often do the unsightly and pestiferous weeds appear, intermingling with, perhaps overpowering the better crop! we sigh, and say an enemy hath done this. Whatever dwells on the mind, becomes a maxim, inspires dread, or raises a wish; will have a powerful influence on coming days, and will do much towards forming the man. The notion which is deeply impressed, will find its time for action; the fact which has been practically explained, will never be forgotten; that knowledge cannot be torn away from the memory, nor its influence on the heart hindered. The habit formed by indolence, by mere custom, by insidious or virtuous design, will continue; and imprint itself deeper and yet deeper on the pliant mind. The mass of knowledge or feeling, of principle or conduct, will be the result of many lessons, gathered from various and often unsuspected sources.

Yet powerful as will be the effect produced by these differing modes of instruction, one much more powerful remains to be considered:—that which it is the professed purpose of this volume to recommend: even *self-cultivation*. Whatever

of the former modes may take effect without this assistance, will be found not to be excellent, but feeble ; not to be virtuous, but vicious : for this principle must be put in exercise, or nothing will be gained worth having. No power can compel the mind ; it must act itself. Vice cannot be forced into it against its own will. Indolently at least it solicits, or actively it cultivates, the baleful gratification. No wonder then, if virtuous principle, if useful knowledge, require active reception and diligent cultivation ; and that by the mind itself. Weeds will grow apace, grow merely by negligence ; but plants of value, of delicacy, of fragrance, or of clustered fruitfulness, demand all the fostering care, watchfulness, and support, which the owner can give them : and the more liberal he is in his daily attention, the more abundant will be his satisfaction, or increase, in their prosperity. There is a selection to be made, which can only be done by one's self ; which sentiment shall be adopted ; for various and even opposite ones will offer. Habits will solicit indulgence ; some of which must be resisted, and others cultivated. Paths of knowledge will open ; the vista may appear delightfully inviting,

which will in fact only bewilder or lead astray. The mind itself must judge ; in order to which it must examine, determine, and act accordingly. Such action, such careful examination, is the very process recommended. One maxim ascertained by one's self, will give more real knowledge, than twenty demonstrated by others, even though done much more adroitly. Self-cultivation works to better purpose. Without her aid, nearly all that others do is lost ; with her effective delightful labour, much is gained, and gained to purpose ; fastened, stored up, placed ready for use, and often resorted to in the actual business of life.

CHAPTER III.

THE PERIOD OF LEAVING SCHOOL IS BEST SUITED TO REAL EDUCATION.

IT is highly proper, no doubt, to begin education early ; too early a time can hardly be named for its commencement ; and much of the ground-work of knowledge may be laid, and firmly fixed, during the years allotted usually to school. Yet it is easy to see, that whatever is thus gained is but little effective : it is only as a preparatory collecting of materials, or arranging the ground plot suitably for the future building. The young do not begin to think, that is, to reason, examine, and choose, till the period when most commonly the tuition of masters and of regular study is over. Play is the only business they follow with interest ; for it is the only occupation they understand. Corporal agility delights them early ; mental adroitness is much later in its growth. Carelessness marked all their proceedings,

as may well be supposed ; and (as will be always the case, even when older, where the mind did not feel the excitation of interest) little indeed do the careless obtain : want of interest in our occupations seldom stops at carelessness ; fatigue rises, and generates disgust. However valuable were the treasures of knowledge opened, if the value was not understood, the treasures will not be regarded. The precious gifts of knowledge will not be solicited, but absolutely refused, by such as feel the drudgery of application, and do not feel the advantage of attainment. Not to perceive a benefit which is remote, may well characterize the years of infancy, and too often remains a check upon all the exertion of early youth. To understand the rules of law, or of cricket, is of immediate importance to those who are daily playing the game, and who lose by want of skill : but to comprehend maxims of trade, or rules of grammar, the actual use of which will not take place for years to come, the want of which will not therefore be felt an inconvenience now, has but little power of excitation, upon the young and still childish mind. Consideration appears with few charms to the giddy, the playful, the ignorant.

The very act, however, of leaving school, forces upon even the giddiest some sort of consideration. The routine of daily exercises to which they had been accustomed, and in which they had attained some mechanical proficiency, ceases. Their occupations are now quite of a different nature, and oblige them to think a little, in order to execute them with any tolerable degree of credit. New duties bring new excitements, if it be only those of novelty and ambition. A new situation draws out what stores of knowledge have been laid up, into actual exertion, and the necessity of consideration as to the mode of applying them, is felt and submitted to ; perhaps is rejoiced in, as affording display of talent, or opportunity for advantage. The situation of a youth becomes even to his own feelings more important ; his doing well or ill what is now committed to him, becomes of more serious consequence, and his powers are put forth accordingly, (whether by choice or by compulsion,) in a more strenuous manner, and to better effect. The strong hand of necessity leads him to closer consideration, as his own comfort is intimately connected even now with his right conduct. He

cannot escape so easily if his lesson is not attended to ; whatever may be his occupation, his exertions in it are more scrupulously watched, and the consequences of his errors, his carelessness, or his contumacy, come upon him with greater weight ; and force him to be more observant. His only way to be at peace, or attain approbation, is to think of what he is about ; and well perform, with understanding of its essential nature, his allotted duty. The gratification of success, success won by diligent application, and considered principles, will reward him ; and make that attention pleasant, which before was only necessary. His learning will proceed rapidly when he puts forth his own talents to the work : and the necessity of thinking, of exerting his own powers of understanding, of comprehension, or of invention, will entwine itself much with every day's comfort, and every night's repose. Nor will he at this season be long before a glimpse of the future will aid the clear discernment of the present. Though he cannot yet write man, he longs to do it ; and swallowing in his mind the few intervening years, he exults to perceive the near approach of maturi-

ty ; and mingles with his exultation, some feelings of apprehension as to his actual state, his capacities, and his prospect of taking well his station, at the fast approaching season. The prospect is animating, the feelings are cautionary, and the mixed effect of both is greater care, application, and mental energy in his present occupations ; preparatory as he feels them to be to his own desired establishment. Nearer and nearer draws the important season ; more and more forcibly does he feel it impel him to think, to cultivate well his talents, to educate himself in every mode which his present situation affords him ; against the important entry upon life and business which he is about to make. These things might have been represented to him while at school, and the studies he was recommended to pursue ; and those forbidden him also, proved to be decided on with reference to this individual point : but then the period seemed too remote to be of necessity provided for, and the importance of such preparation he did not feel, although he might possibly in words and promises acknowledge it. Now he can scarcely help acting under the influence of an expectation

so near. All the right feeling he has, impels him to consider, to prepare, to recollect knowledge before obtained ; and to store his mind with ideas, principles, and resolutions, suited to his coming situation.

If this period of emancipation from school, with its consequent new employments and views, forces the youth to think seriously and to act with care and propriety ; so it enables him to rise to his new duties with more energy and strength. Playful nature begins to subside into something more thoughtful, and more mature. In childhood others think for us, and it is well ; for children are not able to judge for themselves : but as the necessity of doing so approaches, nature pushes up the mind as well as the body, to greater power and capacity. The stature rises, the muscles grow firmer ; the youth is more able than the child to wield the instruments of future wealth. The perceptions too grow clearer, and the judgment much more able to discern the true nature of surrounding objects, friendly or adverse. Small has been his experience yet of life ; but that little has taught him a few lessons, and fixed rules of importance in his

enquiring mind. The connexion between idleness and disgrace he has felt, or witnessed ; the recollection operates on him with more force as his circumstances become more important : the reward of diligence he has tasted ; the sweet relish remains, and impels him to higher exertions, such as are suited to the higher hopes which dawn before him. To these exertions, he brings, even without endeavour, what stores of knowledge he has accumulated : and if his necessities call for exact and appropriate knowledge, he recollects with little trouble, what he now finds to be invaluable data, on which to form his opinion. He must indeed sometimes set himself to reason upon his slightly-formed and ill-connected notions, before he can venture to act upon them with confidence ; but he is better able than ever to pursue truth, and discriminate it from nearly resembling error : while every act of this nature, more and still more capacitates him for the returning operation. Science acquired long since is brought into action ; and science now presented to him, is contemplated with better perceptions, and secured with abler adroitness ; to facilitate the attainment now felt to be for its own

sake desirable, or for his own sake advantageous. Unable to comprehend formerly, he turned his eye from many a phenomenon ; more competent now, he determines to know, and with facility succeeds.

Indeed were a youth leaving school to rush instantly upon life, and have all the responsibilities of his actions lie upon himself at once ; the consequence must most commonly be ruinous. But the customs of society introduce him gradually into the situation in which he is designed to move : and though ostensibly he is freed from the tutor, he is under some friendly instruction and government still : friends have yet a watchful eye over his motions, and a provident care for his wants. Many an interposition of affection shields him still from danger, and many a warning puts him on exerting his own powers to secure his safety. Scholastic tutors he has none ; but whether his pursuits are corporal or mental, some one is at hand to rectify his mistakes, to give a better direction to his powers ; to guide, check, animate, and reward him, according as circumstances may require. His own self indeed must think and act ; but herein he is not left desti-

tute of assistance. He need not survey the world as too intricate a maze for his inexperience ; some one is yet at hand with a clue to guide him : he need not stand aghast at perceiving so many contentions among which he must struggle ; he has support ready to keep him from falling, or to raise him again should his footsteps trip. Whatever he is desirous to learn, some one will take a pleasure in teaching him ; whatever he feels necessary to be done, some will regard it as a duty to assist in performing ; whenever he may stray, he will find his mistake rectified by a friendly voice, before this wandering becomes dangerous. Helps like these he will learn to value : no longer refusing the proffered assistance, he will repay their anxiety for his welfare by becoming more attentive to it himself. The boy may spurn a guide ; hope of improvement is thereby rendered very feeble : but if the youth accept, and especially if he court the friendly assistance, his education of himself will proceed with rapidity, and become more solid while it rises to greater height. His ripening judgment will appreciate the importance of such instructions, whether they proceed from the cool head, or warm

heart, of those around him. The advantage of their experience who have seen so much more than himself, will, if happily appropriated, give him caution, knowledge, dexterity ; of great use to him while cultivating his own powers. Attempts which if made alone must have been frustrated, will by such facilities be rendered successful. He may form his mind to great advantage, rectify his judgment, store his understanding with knowledge, and strengthen every wavering resolution, by such friendly aid.

At this period too, the world, and life, and business, appear to the youth in a new light. His notions of them change : and it is of great importance that this change should be well guided and accurately fixed. Play has been the main business hitherto, in which the heart at least has been engaged : ripening age begins to suspect the importance of diversions ; the term, childish, which so evidently applies to them, raises a distaste, as childhood itself, to which they belong, begins to wear away. It is the natural course of things, and if well regulated, will be of essential service. The power of attend-

ing to business, makes business seem more desirable ; as the opportunity of doing so renders it more facile ; and the occupation itself grows proportionally more pleasant. Business therefore, in whatever form it may solicit attention, does not solicit so much in vain as the idle boy once threatened, and the anxious parent once feared. Its appearance is more lovely now near at hand, than while at a distance was supposed possible. And the changing feelings affect rather to be deeply occupied, and wish completely to assume the new, the more honourable character.

As business becomes attractive, the very pleasure will instigate to such careful attention as may issue in able and adroit performance. To do it any how, will not satisfy himself: his own feelings prompt him to execute whatever he undertakes, in a way which shall be satisfactory to those around him, and thus satisfactory to himself. When it was well or ill done, he did not at one time know or care: now he discerns the difference, values himself on that discernment, and aims that all who have equal understanding on the subject, may admire his own

performances. Indeed, looking forward to a futurity not very remote, he begins for his own sake to wish he were expert ; and the wish is half way towards the attainment in such a case. He sees the disadvantages under which those labour who have lost their opportunities, and has no inclination to suffer with them. Not before did he comprehend the importance of eminence in his line : he feels it now, and it impels him to take all appropriate pains with himself, answerable to his altered views.

Growing stature of body, and ripening powers of mind, give wondrous attraction to the emulated epithet *manly*. Occupation borrows much of its interest from this source. Men do not play like children. Employment, more or less important, characterizes their age, and station, and growing eminence. As the means therefore of assuming this honourable station, will be regarded all the laborious or scientific pursuits to which now the young are introduced. The feelings of ambition, apt to be so troublesome at this age, become stimulants of admirable effect, if their operations take this direction. That

which makes them think sedately, love their proper occupation, and aim at eminence in their specific duty, may be borne with, if now and then its ebullitions are a little wearisome to the by-standers: the change of object in the youth's aim and approbation, promises fair for future days. And now, while this revolution in opinions and manner is rapidly proceeding, now is the time when the greatest care should be taken to guide it, by those whose fostering hand aims at permanent welfare; and by the youth himself especially, as his own care is abundantly more operative; and is not only more necessary in his present circumstances, but is more effective of advantage.

The altering opinion of what is before him, may possibly be accompanied by an altering opinion of what is now left behind: and the time so joyously spent, may appear to have been grievously wasted. What he then was so anxious to obtain, he now finds to be of no use to him; and that which no entreaties could engage him to regard, he feels is of absolute necessity. To regain lost time becomes his own desire. The value of knowledge neglected,

presses upon him at every turn ; and his only chance of not being destructively perplexed for want of it, rests on his doubling his diligence now for its attainment. This necessity is a salutary circumstance : it puts him upon doing for himself, and by himself, that in which he once might have had assistance. The recal of that aid is not within his power ; but the different view he has of things, prompts him to a different application of his activities ; and his education proceeds with slower, but more certain steps.

It is no small advantage to be able to recover from any false step ; to rectify any erroneous notion. This is often impossible to the man ; he has committed himself perhaps by one incautious word, and cannot retract ; he has bound himself by some decisive act, and can in no wise regain his freedom of choice. Not so with the youth. Not completely his own master yet, this advantage remains, that those whose authority is paramount may instruct him to better notions, may restrain him from improper action, and thus make his recovery from a false step both certain and easy. The absolute and unalterable issue of our conduct

makes some situations very anxious ones, and often ensures bitterness to the whole future feelings, if any want of knowledge, lack of temper, or absence of principle, caused an erroneous word to be uttered; or the pressure of any improper bias impelled to an unwise action. Now, friends will good-naturedly make allowances; which by and by, will not on any account be acceded. Youth implies inexperience; and if it is not disgraced by obstinacy, many an error may be passed over, its effects counteracted, and the character, though in danger of being greatly injured, will recover its sterling value. The pains a young man takes with himself, will be well observed, and will prompt the ready forgiveness of inadvertent error. Those will help such a one to recover with great friendliness, who would abandon as incurable one, whose self-sufficiency set advice and reproof at defiance. Self-cultivation, under such fostering kindness, will be much expedited, and well guided to a desirable issue. The neglect of such opportunities is not only hurtful to the character, but tends utterly to prevent their recurrence at any future season, when better judgment might wish for another trial.

There are no words in any language harder to pronounce than these,—“I am mistaken.” The sooner in life we begin to make the trial, the easier will it be to succeed in it. Without any real disgrace can the young speak them. That pride is premature indeed, which fancies it ought not, at such a season of life, to make the acknowledgment. The error may possibly be venial which wanders from the right road; but the crime of persisting in it is of no little magnitude. To turn back cheerfully, to take the warning thankfully, will half atone for the mistake. Such a state of mind will always have due weight with those who judge impartially; and will produce attachment, in proportion as the error might, if persisted in, disgust. The mind itself changes more easily than it will in future years. The time therefore to rectify mistakes, and bring the mind to proper knowledge and tone of feeling, is marked by nature. Let not the precious opportunity slip by; but with care proportioned to the specific nature, and transient duration of it, learn every thing which may now so easily be attained; and do whatever is requisite, and which can now in the best manner be accomplished.

Attention at this precise period, is also recommended by the important fact, that every thing which now occurs is likely to have enduring influence in future years. Impressions made in childhood are not easily effaced; yet many absurd notions then formed will be given up, and many silly attachments will loosen of themselves. But the company the youth keeps, will form his own self, to a considerable and lasting similarity. The notions he now imbibes, appearing to himself to be the result of ripening reason, will last upon him, and guide his conduct, even when sad experience shall prove to all but himself, how mischievous they are. At this outset of life, much depends on the first steps. The habits now beginning to cast their thickening chains around him, should well be watched; and the bands courageously snapped, before they become too strong. Do not lay the foundation for a prison, where that of a palace would be as easily, as pleasantly, and more profitably effected.

Even trivial circumstances occurring now, may have important effects; let the prudent take care that no hurtful influ-

ence remain. A careless sarcasm may damp rising genius, or paralyze the most happy exertions ; be aware of it, and ballast the mind with principle against such flitting blasts. A distant hope may stimulate to exhausting exertions : let not any unreal semblance deceive you to efforts which must be wasted. A single incident, happily or unhappily occurring, may be formed into a rule by the inconsiderate, and made to instigate or perplex the more important concerns of life : do not suffer your judgment to determine, or your resolution to fix, till you have seen more and examined closer. The propriety, the necessity, of having a watchful eye over your own mind at this age, may be easily inferred from the aptitude the age itself evinces, to adopt final opinions ; to maintain them as if they were unimpeachable ; and to venture on conduct corresponding, without suspicion of danger, or any requisite circumspection.

Should the changing, fixing age, permit any false notions to obtain, or any injurious habits to form, to what period can we look forward for the recovery of ground so lost ? Life will inevitably take much

of its shape and colouring, from the plastic powers now operating. Opening reason, although but half formed, perceives its own advancement, and fancies its progress is complete. The joy with which it seizes on any newly discovered principle, serves to open the mind to its full effect. Any new statement will pass for a new principle, to such as have seen little of the *pros* and *cons* of any subject. Notions taken up without proper examination are but prejudices: but what can be harder to overcome? How weak is reason itself in the unequal contest! Years of struggling, and of suffering, may scarcely suffice to rectify the mistakes of our teens. The powers of the mind, like some cements, are apt to set in a moment, if fresh: great is the importance then of well conducting that operation, whose continuance is likely to be so lasting; where to undo it is next to impossible, and always with considerable detriment to the beauty, if not to the firmness of the workmanship.

If erroneous notions are likely to be so influential, how much more evil is possible to arise from erroneous conduct! The

giddiness of youth, nay its honourable warmth of feeling, will frequently hurry the inexperienced into some deplorable folly. Great indeed is the evil in itself, but much more to be lamented in its certain and perhaps indelible effects. One act of indiscretion, contrary to better principles, will suggest an endeavour to get rid of the principle, rather than own the disagreeing conduct to be evil ; rather than forego the baleful indulgence, which of necessity the principle if retained would require. So perish frequently all the religious instructions of our younger years ; not under conviction of their fallacy, but under the perverting bias given by one act of vicious gratification. All that might have guided the man, is cast away by the headstrong youth : the rudder is neglected, and the compass jerked into the sea ; the frail bark, after sailing gaily before the wind for a little season, is dashed at last upon the rocks, or buried in the quicksands ; without power either of prevention or recovery. Where recovery speedily takes place, yet is the evil of wrong conduct not so speedily overcome. The wound that is completely healed, may leave a scar. A blot attaches to character

frequently, which lasts and injures to the latest hour of life. Many an external sneer, many an internal sigh, will be occasioned by it. Beyond help will the sorrow continue. Should even religion completely renovate the mind, yet will the bitter recollection remain ; and religion will rather sanctify and soften, than obliterate from the memory, facts so obtrusive. Wise was that request of David, "Keep me from presumptuous sin ; so shall I be innocent of the great transgression." Whatever may be the emollient effect of time, or of piety, on such internal remorse ; neither, nor both conjoined, will in all probability stop the tongue of slander from propagating the magnified report, far and wide. The culprit finds that blasting rumour had been before him ; and prepared the suspicious and the malignant to do him injury, long after he had supposed scandal herself was tired with the monotonous repetition. He will meet the report again and again, as the lingering echoes among the mountains return, after long intervals of gloomy silence.

If the powers of discernment and reflection begin now to ripen, this must

surely be the season wherein something may with care be effected. Parents watch it with much anxiety, and redouble their exertions, in hope of seeing some beneficial change, as the period of manhood begins to approach. But in vain will be all their kindness and all their care, unless the stripling himself feels something of the importance attaching to his present movements; and regulates his own proceedings accordingly. All done before for his education, will now, either be lost beyond recovery, or will fix in his mind knowledge and principles of lasting influence, and of vital consequence: he mingles more and more in public, and his character, among observers, will take its form, gradually, but in a way to endure, and to leave lasting influence on his own prosperity. As labours the husbandman in the few weeks of spring, to eradicate weeds, to break the soil, and to get in the good seed; aware that it is the best season, transient, important, on which all the hopes of harvest depend:—so let the youth, in his teens, cultivate the more prolific mind.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CULTIVATION.

IF it is allowed that character is of essential importance, it will readily be granted that education is the grand means of forming character. The youth assents to this proposition, and replies, he has been so many years at school ; states the authors to which he has attained, the sciences he has learned, with the masters and tutors by whom he has been instructed ; and possibly too the prizes he has won. All this sounds well, and the sound will perhaps impose on the inconsiderate, to persuade them that all is done which needs to be done ; all is gained which can ever be wanted. If such a delusion obtain, if it continue and should be fostered, the character is ruined : it will never rise to eminence by improvement ; it will lose what already appears promising. As the corn cut before it is sufficiently ripe, must of necessity grow soft and damp ; must grow mouldy, and perish.

Even when at school, as recollection will abundantly prove, no master can teach a child unless that child will teach himself. To set him tasks is little, unless the pupil will learn them well ; nay, unless he will understand them clearly, and remember them for use. The most lucid explanations, if not comprehended, will not instruct : and this not comprehending is occasioned, not so much by want of capacity, as by want of attention ; by indolence, volatility, obstinacy, and having the mind occupied with something else. The boys who have been at one school have all had the same routine of instruction ; but all have not profited equally, though in the same class : for each has not equally endeavoured to *teach himself*. When the whole school has gone into a wood a-nutting, where each has had equal opportunity, what differences will appear in the several loads brought out : occasioned, not so much by the strength of body, or size of satchel, as evidently by the greater diligence, adroitness, and spirit of enterprise, shown in pursuit of the object. The treasure is small, according as indolence, fear, or playfulness prevails : or swells, as emulation, voracity, and activity impel.

Let every youth examine whether from the garden of science he has come laden away ; whether he has gathered from the tree of knowledge, those purple clusters which may become a store for future use ; to exhilarate his spirits against coming seasons of wintry necessities. Perhaps the survey carefully taken, will show a great deficiency, or a total lack of some sorts of knowledge ; though his companions have with the same means obtained a respectable store. A portion of what has been obtained, it may be the whole stock, is something crude and indigestible ; of little use in this state, should occasion call for it.

It not unfrequently happens, that whatever has been even diligently sought under tuition, is not of the exact nature which will be absolutely needful in life, in the line of occupation to which circumstances lead. A deep acquaintance with classical lore, however valuable, will seldom be of great use in a merchant's counting-house : there, a thorough knowledge of book-keeping, or even of common arithmetic, would be abundantly more appropriate. Much that is taught to a youth, is exactly what he must forget, it being of no use to

him. It will slip from his memory for want of daily recollection, and so it must, for other sorts of knowledge imperiously claim the attention.

Should a youth therefore take up the idea, that he has already learned all he needs to know, he will deceive himself. And this, like every false notion, will bring with it a train of erroneous actings, and procure him not honour, but disgrace. Self-sufficiency will render him unpleasant in society, and urge him to undertake that, in which, for want of proper knowledge, he must fail. He will no longer continue his endeavours after knowledge, conceiving that his stores are already redundant. What he might easily obtain, he suffers to slip by him. A habit of indolence fastens on him, and of course a stop is put to his character. Now there must be some disease when a young plant stops growing. Such disease as betokens decay ; for principles are never at a stand ; every thing gets better or worse.

Whatever may be the attainments of a youth under tuition, it must be repeated, let him not suppose his education to be

finished. He will take up an idea more true in itself, and much more beneficial to him, if he look upon all he has learned merely as a preparation, a ground-work, on which he may now proceed to build the actual knowledge necessary for him in life. Excellently will it serve for this purpose. And the securing its true use and advantage, will now absolutely depend upon himself. The various branches of instruction he has pursued, are in fact but as so many figures, or cyphers, the real value of which cannot be known till self-cultivation has formed the integer, and placed the decimal comma. Then many a staring figure which seemed to promise much, will be found in actual use and value, only an hundredth, or a thousandth part of what it at first appeared to be.

Should the rudiments of science, the science of life, have been planted with due selection; it is the fostering hand of self-cultivation which must rear them to maturity. The lessons received from tutors may now be converted into sterling knowledge. The mind, by its own meditation, will comprehend, what no didactic lectures could give him effectually to possess.

What is so fastened becomes secure, and will not easily be lost ; as all that instruction must be, which is poured upon an inattentive or resisting mind. Notions, facts, and consequences, become our own, only as we ourselves grasp them, lay them by in the storehouse of memory ; and by frequent bringing them into actual service, become ourselves adroit in putting them to their specific uses. One problem worked through the impulse of actual occasion, interesting us in the result ; one chain of consequences, examined link by link, because we want to know if there be any flaw, will imprint what we do know indelibly on the memory. It will be more easily recollected on some future occasion, because it will be more thoroughly understood.

The value of what has been already obtained, often does not consist in its own intrinsic worth, but in its being something which we can improve upon, and bring to real use. The foundation of a building is not very beautiful, nor does its importance arise from any thing which can be conceived in it alone ; but the superstructure owes to it its extent, solidity, and beauty.

It is however only by raising the building, that the foundation work is of value. If the architect stop short, all his labour and expense are lost. To have this foundation of knowledge laid, laid firmly to some extent, will indeed be an advantage to the young, when the concerns of life require them to exert themselves; and they thus find some degree of preparation begun: something on which to place their feet securely, while they labour to ascend to greater height. Every thing known will become of use: even lesser things or trifles casually picked up, may afford a hint in after life; and prove to the inquisitive, the studious, or the active, of incalculable value.

Knowledge laid up in scholastic instruction, may be compared to gold or silver in ingots; valuable indeed, but not properly useful, till shaped into some vessel, or minted into current coin. A man may be rich, and yet starve, if his riches are not in some transferable shape. This shaping of knowledge to its various uses, will depend on a man's self. A mere knowledge of the learned languages is lumber, till a man begin to study some subject for him-

self; then he finds the value of erudition. A large acquaintance with the most beautiful portions of classic literature, is but a load of gewgaws, till a man want to look on nature, or on mankind, for his own improvement; or to write for the improvement of others: then all that his memory retains will assist him with many an elegant image, and many a shrewd maxim, an intelligent observation, or a sublime truth. Necessarily, knowledge as attained at school is only of a general nature; for seldom is a youth's destination in life so certainly fixed, or so well understood, as to render it possible that tutors should give specific instruction, suited to the eventual scene of operation; even if competent so to vary their communications. It therefore must remain for the youth himself, when he leaves their tuition, to arrange what he has obtained ready for his actual use; or to give it that specific turn which shall subserve to his own occasions; and thereby make all he has his own in fact, and not merely in form.

A slight acquaintance with biography will convince us, that it is thus the most eminent characters have arisen to their meridian splendour.

All who have increased our knowledge in science, nature, or art, must of necessity be self-taught. Newton did not learn his sublime discoveries at school; but taught himself by patient attention, acute sagacity, and laborious investigation. No giddy, volatile, unobservant mind, could have become a Newton, though trained at fifty universities. Before him, Copernicus had displayed the scheme of the heavenly bodies, and the general nature of their motions; not as he had learned, but in direct opposition to the Ptolemaic system then in vogue. His discoveries were carried further, and proved to be true, by the labours of Galileo, with his new-invented telescope. Whatever general knowledge schools and universities might have given to such men, it was their own application of what they had so obtained, which enabled them to perform the wonders recorded; and to fix their names, like the stars they contemplated, brilliant and undecaying in the hemisphere of philosophy.

Were the list increased, as it might easily be, with names noble and honoured by posterity; names of men who have en-

larged the bounds of knowledge, and given new worlds of science to the human mind: we should discern many whose previous education yielded them excellent assistance in their profound and sublime researches; but a much greater proportion would arise from ranks of illiterate poverty; or such as come very near it, in the estimation of lettered pride.

See Brindley leading his artificial rivers through the bowels of the mountain; or wafting his navies high in air over the deep ravine, or the wide-spread vale. While smiling commerce attends, wondering, upon his labours; and distant provinces meet by his help to interchange their specific productions, and mutual good offices. No early education fostered his genius. His genius rather broke through all the shackles of illiterate poverty; and grasped, by its own exertions, all the wonders of mechanics in her varied powers.

Observe Franklin, a poor printer's lad. —By acute reasoning on electricity, and happy, though simple experiments, he fetches from the clouds their vivid light.

nings : rises to the rank at which philosophers look up, and moves in an exalted sphere among statesmen ; the honour of his country, the boast of the transatlantic world.

What was Simpson, the great mathematician, author of learned treatises, ranking him with the most scientific men of his age ? At first only a poor weaver : but by sedulous attention he taught himself ; and rose from his obscurity to a name of lasting eminence.

Herschel, whose mighty telescopes carry us, as it were, close to the stellar orbs ; rose to the patronage of majesty, and the listening attention of European astronomers, from the low station of a fifer boy in the army.

The names of Chambers, author of the *Cyclopædia* ; of Ferguson, eminent in his day as a lecturer on astronomy ; of Sir Humphrey Davy, now deeply searching into the secrets of nature, by the aid of chemistry ; of Buchanan, eminent for his researches in India : deserve to be mentioned, as having forced their way

upwards, in spite of overwhelming difficulties.

Without going back to Whittington and his cat, we may select many honourable names in the mercantile department, and some who have filled the magisterial chair of the first city in the world ; who originally had no advantages to set them forward : but who, under providence, by diligent exertion of the virtues, habits, and intelligence, appropriate to their situations, have been the architects of their own fortunes.

These, and many more, might be adduced as instances of the wonderful effects of self-education ; for their own labour and genius has done all for them, in spite of the difficulties, with which the want of instruction loaded their exertions, in every step of their pursuit.

Columbus, who added a new world to commerce, would never have immortalized his name, had he been content with the beaten track, or the common-place ideas which he had learned when a boy. He thought for himself ; studied, reason-

ed, made the daring experiment, and so succeeded. Every discoverer in nature, or art, or science, must in a similar manner have proceeded greatly alone; as across a trackless ocean, guiding his adventurous bark with appropriate skill, courage, and determination. All which exertions are a man's own powers operating; and by such operations alone can any man rise to eminence or usefulness among his fellow men.

Were we to select a thousand names of persons who had been sent from any public seminary, and to trace their various histories, successes, and failures; we should find one or two supereminent; perhaps fifty highly respectable; and the rest sinking through the several gradations of mediocrity, frivolity, namelessness, and some to contempt. One might venture to foretel, that the latter classes had been extremely inattentive, stubborn, and ungrateful for the instruction afforded, when under tuition; and, glad of their escape from the trammels of education, conceiving the whole process to be over when they left school, they launched on the ocean of life too ignorant, too careless,

too indolent, to make any way ; and gradually, either struck on some rock, whirled deep in the quicksand, or stranded on the first head-land they had to double ; now ship-wrecked for life, as to honour, fame, or respectability. One might be equally sure, that such of the voyagers as kept a-head, and got safe to the port of honour, laden with rich merchandize ; were also such whose minds, ever active, stored up at school all they could obtain, and put it to instant use, as soon as they had to act for themselves. Thus, adding every day something to their stock of knowledge, they were able (being well ballasted) to carry more sail, to outstrip competitors : thus could they make their way adventurously, yet safely, in some trackless sea of science, and explore some hitherto untouched and uncultivated country : securing their own advantage, to the benefit of civilized society, and the wonder of gaping, staring indolence ; who, half dozing where first set down, is awake only just enough to wonder how it happens that others do so much, and itself has done nothing.

An examination of the sort thus hinted at, would show, concerning the successful, that their own minds were at work upon the advantages which education, such as they had, afforded them : not accepting as *data*, however recommended, any truths or statements which they did not themselves verify, and thus make really their own. A spirit of curiosity put them upon exploring every corner of the department of science to which they could gain access. The pleasure of gaining one step, especially if that step were difficult, fully repaid the labour ; and the hope of attaining greater heights, stimulated them to continued and increasing exertions. It is true, disappointments happened not unfrequently ; yet these did not damp their ardour, but rather increased their zeal, as well as directed their future efforts to better advantage. Indefatigable, they were not to be repelled by the difficulties at which indolence stands aghast ; obtaining knowledge, they were not put to a stand where ignorance, must have stopped ; gaining pleasure in the chase, they did not tire, as frivolity is apt to do ; and aware of the value of the mass they obtained, they put it to real use, nor lost (as is too

often seen where the capricious dig for treasure) that which, though not gold, is the ore from which sterling riches may with more knowledge and continued labour be obtained. They won their way by active, diligent, continued, and well-understood exertion. Their eminence they deserve ; the laurels they have gained sit well upon their brow.

If the importance of a man's own energies is seen, when we contemplate those who have received some advantage from education ; how much more decided will the value of self-exertion appear, when we follow the track, as we often may, of those who become eminent without having the vantage ground of instruction, from which to start.

There is scarcely any thing more gratifying to the mind than the well-written life of a person whose intellect struggles through every difficulty arising from want of instruction, want of books, want of examples, want of patronage. Who yet continues to struggle, till triumphantly emerging into notice, art surrenders some of her choicest secrets ; science smiles ;

and fame, if not emolument, places the successful experimenter high above common names.

Not scantily are the niches in the temple of fame ornamented with lasting memorials of persons, thus claiming their well-deserved honours : persons, who have been the boast and blessing of their country, by dint of unsubdued patience, fortitude, and vivacious genius. Every department of art and science is filled with them. The stimulating examples are on every hand. From the lowest rank of life they start forth ; all the shackles of ignorance they break ; the repulsive frowns of the proud cannot daunt them ; the fears of the timorous they do not listen to. Determined to excel, they do excel : their native energies urging them forward in the honourable career, till success, more or less complete, crowns their glowing ardour ; and they sit down to enjoy the honourable reputation they have so well earned.

Reputation and eminence thus acquired, are acquired lawfully. Mankind allow the claim : although, when founded on

riches, birth, accident, or any external means, they are apt to dispute it; and covertly or openly to degrade the vain pretender. But the case supposed, shows MIND; and mind will, in all its exertions, maintain its own superiority of character, above person, or dress, or any thing confessedly of a meaner nature. Men of elevated minds, are men of elevated rank; among all who perceive the mental energies, or who benefit (as who does not?) by the discoveries made, and achievements won. Men rich in gold, are often obliged to borrow the assistance of men who are poor (except in superiority of talent, that true riches,) in order to put their wealth to any beneficial use. Men of birth merely, while every thing is quiet, may float on the surface of society: in a storm they feel their feebleness; they cannot bear the shock, they cannot steer the vessel. If any uncommon emergence occurs, they cannot tell what to do: if any thing requiring promptness and energy is to be done, they are not able to do it. Talent alone, the cultivated, well-informed talent, can be of real service in such cases. Mental energy will rise in all times of difficulty, and display its intrinsic value.

War, politics, science, art, commerce, and polemic controversies ; nay, the smaller circumstances of life, the *hows* and *whens* of every day's occurrence, give opportunities which knowledge alone can seize to real advantage.

Mind alone is not all that is implied in successful eminence ; it includes also such an assiduous energetic application of mental powers, as gives them a valuable character. There are men whose minds were by nature competent to great events ; but sensuality has debased them, indolence has laid them asleep, or baseness has perverted their noble powers to ignoble mischief. Let them sink into deserved neglect. Sink, Yes ! however they may rise to base eminence, it is sinking still, in all fair, and sober, and lasting estimation.

It is easy to see, that a mind thus actively employed in its own cultivation, must gain considerably. No seed can be sown of a nature more productive than knowledge ; if the soil be but good, and the cultivation diligent, careful, and scientific. Knowledge, indeed, like other seed, requires laborious cultivation. If cast where the

traffic of the highway destroys it, or vices like luxuriant weeds choke it ; how can it prosper ? But if it fall into good ground ; if it be received, thought over, examined, and every shooting fibre of it cherished, it will take firm hold of the mind ; it will ramify into many shapes ; each of which will draw its appropriate nourishment from whatever surrounds ; and the whole plant, consisting at first of only one single idea, shall grow to a tall tree ; beautiful and fruitful, under the shadow of which many a one shall repose.

It was a single idea, a mere hint, the dropping of an apple from a tree, which, in the mind of Newton, evolved and ramified till it embraced and unfolded the planetary system. Many a man had seen an apple fall before that time ; but for want of thinking, and reasoning, and pushing his ideas forward, the circumstance became utterly useless to him. How near to great discoveries have many men been, which they missed because they were too inattentive, or too indolent, to put to its proper use the knowledge they had gained. Some other more inquisitive explorer comes to the same spot, is struck with the

appearance, is roused by the difficulty, is made more eager by obstacles, finds at last some mode of proceeding further, and opens the stores of science, as did he open the mines of Potosi, who, pulling at a bush to assist him in climbing the mountain, which yielded, and broke up in his hands, was attracted by a glittering appearance, and on further researches, discovered it to be solid silver!

If a man have landed estate, he can procure labourers, have it cultivated for him, and while indolently reclining on his arm-chair, may have the rich produce brought to his feet. But the cultivation of MIND must be SELF-CULTIVATION. Whatever assistance he may gain from others, he will grow rich in knowledge, only as he labours at it himself. Highly favoured is he who has access to men of cultivated minds, who can give him the result of their enquiries: but he must listen, and reason, and think for himself; or he will not be the wiser for their society. Highly favoured is he who has access to books, where intelligence displays the stores of science; but then books must be read, nay, and well digested; not merely

swallowed ; or the knowledge, like the food which remains crude, will not yield strength and growth ; but is either soon parted with, or becomes the means of inflating and fiery diseases. In this respect, a little food well assimilated with the constitution, will avail more to health and activity, than a plethoric meal, or a constant state of nauseating abundance, where the man's own powers do not operate. Some men are overloaded with knowledge without being wise ; oppressed, rather than supplied ; they sink into torpidity, and lose all that power of exertion which might have made their plenty the means of enjoyment, and of vigorous progress.

Thus many who have been well taught, learn nothing ; as the stone, though immersed in water, does not imbibe : while the sponge acts powerfully on every drop, appropriates all it touches, and eventually becomes full. The active mind, when it once begins to operate for itself, obtains knowledge from every object, every circumstance, every source. If it pursue some idea, till it discover its root, its ramifications, its genuine fruits ; rich is the produce thus obtained : many a cluster of

truth, natural, moral, physical, and divine, is added to the undecaying store. If the result of the process is complete disappointment, even then, to be sure the thing is not there, is knowledge; knowledge often highly useful, in preventing a continuance of fruitless researches, and the false clinging to chimerical hopes. Every disappointment, if properly used, tends to narrow the remaining field of experiment, and brings the object sought so much nearer to hand; as all the refuse cast from the sieve, brings the real diamond sooner and nearer into view. That process which issued in disappointment as to the supposed track, may nevertheless show other openings; some of which are worth the trouble of exploring, some of which may lead either to the object sought, or to some other of intrinsic value. The patient search may be repaid with unexpected treasure, although the one object sought after may still be undiscovered.

Now a mind thus ever active, searching wherever it can, examining all it finds, securing whatever is valuable, and storing up for use its mental treasures, must in-

vitably grow affluent. Every gain not only adds to the store, but itself begins to grow, and produce other modes and sources of increasing substance, till the mind becomes richly furnished. The man assumes his rank in society; his treasures are resorted to as an acknowledged mine of wealth : wealth of intellect, which unlike other riches, increases by dispersion, and grows as it spreads itself abroad. The difference between two persons after a life of seventy years, one of whom has been idle, while the other has successfully cultivated his own mind, is beyond the conception of those, who, letting slip every opportunity, or content with ignorance, think nothing is to be known more than they themselves know; or that nothing is to be gained, except by some vague unintelligible ideas fluttering about the word genius; a term, with its corresponding term luck, of admirable convenience to the careless, the trifling, and the dull.

It is a pity to see gold put to any filthy or servile use; it deserves to deck the elegance of beauty, or encircle as a diadem the royal brow. Let not mental gold then be debased, by an application unwor-

thy of its genuine importance, value, and purity.

Mental imbecility is a sight the most deplorable, unless indeed we state mental depravity. As the best things when corrupted become the worst, so is it with mind. Imbecile, it is useless; but debased, perverted, it is mischievous. The former is sad, the latter is dreadful: especially as neither state is necessary to it; both are the result of negligence, misapplication, or pestilential contact.

But a mind actively employed in perfecting its own powers, in enlarging its own capacities, and bringing into useful action all its acquired stores; is employed in a manner worthy of intellect.

If a man pass all his days dozing upon a bed, or lounging on a sofa, we can scarcely repress the smile of contempt at limbs so useless: especially, if by nature they are strong or beautiful. But if mind be thus indolent, if its active powers sink into lethargy, if it be not roused to action; the soul of an oyster might do as well for such a man. An intellectual spi-

rit is lost, unless its activities are employed; and that upon something noble, useful, and worthy its high dignity.

The mind which has no energies of its own, must be always looking to, and borrowing, the activity of others: a state of poverty and dependence of the most disgraceful kind. To be able to avail one's self of others' powers, is indeed an advantage. But to be dependent on them for ideas, to have no opinion of one's own, to be obliged to wait till some one else has pronounced, is mendicity and imbecility; degrading to the individual, paralyzing all efforts he might be inclined to make, and inducing such a habit of walking in leading strings, as tends to preclude his ever going alone. Such take up the opinions of those whom they regard, as oracles, and still have no notions properly their own. If they maintain these opinions, it is not because convinced of their soundness, but because they are told so and so. If these opinions are controverted, they are quite puzzled, and are unable to defend them, or to give them up as untenable; till they have again consulted the mind to which they yield implicit obedience. To con-

tradict them is to confute them, till they have obtained a new store of wordy ammunition, or armour, for a new combat.

If they meet with some truth in science, or fact in nature ; they dare not allow it till sanctioned. Should a consequence present itself to their mendicant minds, they dare not receive it, nor follow it up one step out of the beaten track : or should they venture, they soon get bewildered, and alarmed. Their only course, therefore, is to give up the pursuit ; not having knowledge, courage, or power, to proceed to the actual attainment of the object sought ; however valuable it may seem to be.

Such stooping, and creeping, in a man ; a man formed to stand upright, walk, and climb, is disgraceful to the individual ; painful to every sensible beholder ; and the source of much evil, as it gives opportunity to prouder minds to domineer, and to lead blindfold those, who fear to open their own eyes. This must, however, be the fate of such as will not cultivate their own powers. Such as suffer their minds to lie dormant ; who starve the intellec-

tual system for want of its proper nourishment, or feed it upon trash, which can only generate peccant humours.

If, on the other hand, we see a man cautiously, but firmly, treading on sure ground, and venturing, now here, now there, as he finds he safely may ; whatever be the game he pursues, we do not doubt he will eventually obtain it. We know at least, he promotes his own health by the chase. Let the mind be actively employed, its powers will be strengthened by the exercise. Let a man learn to think, and to reason, to know, and to judge ; he will become more of a man : his employment is worthy his high rank in creation ; his opportunities will not be lost upon him. His intellect engaged, invigorated, enriched, will become more intellectual. Mind will shine ; and even in all that employs and delights the senses, the superiority of the soul above them, will be honourably conspicuous.

It is scarcely possible that right acting should obtain, without right views to guide. It cannot in such case be any thing but habit. It can scarcely stand the shock of

opposing influences ; it cannot be expected to continue ; it certainly cannot be depended on, for stability. He who thinks and reasons may be mistaken, and his conduct may be erroneous ; but he will in all likelihoods discover his mistakes, and rectify his conduct accordingly, whenever he perceives his path is wrong ; (which he is much more likely to do than the indolent and inattentive.) Whenever he perceives which path is right, he is then most strongly prepared to act as he ought to do in future ; because his alteration will proceed from conviction, and will be guided by knowledge.

Conduct is in all cases influenced, more or less, by the understanding. As this is well or ill furnished, rightly or erroneously informed, so will the choice made, be wise or silly ; well or ill adapted to the purposes in view. For a man, then, to store his mind with accurate information, is the first step to wise and honourable acting. And let not any one think, that information on this or that subject is of no importance to him ; or that an erroneous notion concerning it will not have any injurious consequence. That path of science

crease. Let every faculty have due attention, and the man will thrive. Many are the seeds of knowledge; various and prolific the plants of science. Let such as best suit the soil be reared, with requisite care; and the harvest may be reckoned on, as a rich and luxuriant season.

The husbandman glows with joy as he sees the plantations spring, as he finds the toil bestowed is now likely to be rewarded. He knows his honest fame will be sure: he will be well distinguished from the sluggard at the first glance, and honoured accordingly. Every man owes this duty to himself. To neglect his mind, is a crime of no small magnitude; a sort of *felo de se*, deep indeed in guilt; because destructive, not to his body merely, but to his nobler powers; to his better self; to that intellectual spirit, which denominates him man.

His very nature demands of him this care and cultivation. In vain are admirable powers given him, if he will not use them; in vain is he raised far above the brute, if he continues prone, and will not seek after more than they do. Why has

he firm limbs, if he will not stand? if he will not teach his right hand her proper cunning, it is given him in vain. Why has he powers of understanding, of reasoning, and judgment, if he will not think? Capacities are wasted on him, if he will not store them well; and keep them in continual and useful employ.

The public cry out, and justly, of the millions of acres suffered to lie waste, which are capable of considerable and annually increasing produce. It is a debt due to society to bring them into cultivation. It has obtained as an axiom, that he who causes an ear of corn to grow, where none ever grew before, is a public benefactor. Has not society an equal claim, a much more important right, to call on every man not to let his mental powers lie waste? Will not a rich harvest of ideas, principles, and truths, growing in any man's mind, become a public benefit? And has not society a right to exclaim against the idle drone, who contributes nothing to the common stock? Is not the applause of successive generations well bestowed upon such as elevate Mind, and bring a more than common quantity into general use?

Has a man any family connexion, does he belong to any body, or does any body belong to him? let every one recollect, and he will find in his immediate parents, or his remoter ancestry, some name to be supported; some talent to excite emulation; some progress made in science, art, or usefulness, which should stimulate him to push forward, in a career so glorious, so important. Brothers invite, and sisters urge the youth, whose happiness it is to own titles so dear, so influential. Let there be no one of the little circle deficient, no one stone in the concentric arch untrue to its proper station: be able to meet their eyes without the conscious blush of indolence, or the hardened stare, which custom, in shameful, but unshaming backwardness, is apt to assume. Be one of us; an honour to the family, to the name already brightening in the records of useful and honourable fame.

He who gives to every one the talents he possesses, will expect them to be put to their proper uses; well knowing that much increase may be thus obtained. The man who is content merely to vegetate, who has powers of life given him; con-

tent just to exist, when he might grow, and rise, and shine, be useful, be honourable ; surely such a man, if man he deserves to be called, will be found an unprofitable servant, will be adjudged to have hid his talent in a napkin, and wasted his master's goods. He, on the contrary, who has used his various powers honourably, as he certainly will gain other talents, two, or five, or ten ; will have that best of all commendation,—well done, enter thou into joy.

The importance of self-education is not fully perceived, unless we add, that a habit of so proceeding, if well begun, will, in its own nature, tend to continuance. Its effects will accumulate ; as the process will last through life, and be increasing in its benefits with every year.

When the mind begins to try its own powers, the exertion will repay itself, by the pleasure it affords. To find a purse on the road, yields not more gratification to the sordid, than the finding out truth, especially if on some new view of it, gives to the inquisitive mind. To be in the continual habit of such gratifications, is to make life pleasant indeed. Treasure

found as before supposed, may be lost again : but knowledge once obtained can never be stolen away. It remains ; and the joy of finding, when settled into satisfaction at possessing, continues to yield out its beneficial influence without ever being exhausted.

Every exertion of the mind, as every exertion of the limbs, makes more and greater exertions easy. Adroitness and pliancy of the fingers, in any of the fine arts, is not more the consequence of daily practice, than is adroitness of mind, and readiness in perceiving knowledge, and hunting out truth. Accuracy of observation arises from frequency ; nay, from frequency of mistake, might be added, as well as from frequency of success. As this adroitness increases, and men get more sure of the process, the process itself becomes more pleasant. New ideas are added with greater facility, and greater pleasure ; all the store is so much readier for use, and more effective, which ever way applied.

Man grows in height and strength, till he has attained his full stature, and there he stops : his body and his corporeal pow-

ers cannot go beyond a certain standard : food adds nothing ; it only maintains his frame in health and activity. Were he to continue to grow beyond a certain point, it would be to his own disadvantage. But who can say at what point of knowledge, judgment, and capacity, mind, intellectual mind, must of necessity stop, or in propriety ought ? Here increase helps to further increase, in an unlimited manner. Mind knows no plethora ; it is never too full to allow of addition. All its stores, if rightly placed and properly used, only make room and give opportunity for the reception of further treasures. Knowledge, wisdom, mental capacity, and power ; like him, after whose image mind was formed, seem in a sense infinite, as to possibility : and the actual attainments some have made, warrant every one to hope that by diligent, constant, and judicious exertions, much more may be done than can be conceived of by the indolent and supine.

Glorious is the prospect, most fascinating the hope, held out by self-cultivation to those who, having had more or less care bestowed on their instruction, now set themselves to make the most of all they

have attained to : and who gather every day and every hour something to add to the intellectual stock ; something that shall open the mind to yet greater improvement, prepare for further exertions, and ensure successes in studies, and arts, and pursuits, of highest importance, through years long to come.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE VARIOUS OBJECTS OF SELF-CULTIVATION.

HITHERTO the principle of self-cultivation has been considered only in general, while its importance and efficiency has been shown. Perhaps the tenor of the reasoning may give the idea to some, that these exertions only relate to probable station in life. It will be proper, therefore, that we take a more enlarged view of the principle, and its operations : both that our perception of its value may be better founded ; and that our exertions to attain it may not be narrowed, and thereby made but partially beneficial.

Many circumstances have influence in generating that aggregate of honourable estimation, which we call character. To all these the wary youth had need give his attention. Should he, as many do, confine his cares to talent, he will labour much in vain. The world look for more.

They have a right to expect principle in a variety of forms ; and will yield but sparingly their esteem, unless they see it spread its benign influence through the whole man.

The grand object of self-education is the mind ; to cultivate the intellectual powers. This is the man's self ; this is capable of much improvement ; this imperiously demands our care ; and this will, beyond all calculation, repay us.

On principle, then, aim to give these faculties their due. Many, as drawn by one delightful prospect or another, cultivate those powers of mind which are allied thereto.

This is only partial ; it is liable to become desultory, or it may fail entirely. Principle will feel the bounden duty of enriching, training, and rendering effective, all the mighty, but dormant energies of intellect. To starve the mind, will be considered as a species of self-destruction. To suffer torpor to benumb, or perversion to debase any one faculty, will be ranked among errors of deep malignity.

Store, then, the perceptive powers with well-digested notions, upon every subject within reach. Be covetous of knowledge ; and do not slightly condemn any one species, as unworthy notice, if a fair opportunity offer of gaining an insight into its principles. A cursory glance of mere curiosity, guided by intelligence, has sometimes given a hint, which at some distant day has proved of great importance. Some knack or acquirement, regarded at the time as a mere amusement, has, in seasons of adversity, become the means of obtaining a comfortable livelihood :— thus many of the French nobility, while emigrants, maintained themselves. Search through nature ; her exhaustless stores will be ever new : become well acquainted with art ; the ingenuity of man has operated, almost with creative effect, upon the raw materials which nature afforded. Look at men ; study what the world really is. Many mistake widely, and ensure future disappointments, by expecting more from the world than it can possibly give, and much more than it actually yields. Study men, and be aware of their intrinsic value ; lest, esteeming fair professions too highly, confidence should be betrayed to

loss, perhaps to ruin ; or lest, from a few base transactions, a misanthropic cast should be given to the feelings, and man should be undervalued ; to the great privation of solace, and the injuriously benumbing of kindly affections in the mind so distrusting. Refuse on principle to give place to false ideas, on subjects so nearly connected with all your conduct, and with all your feelings. Especially, omit not that most important of all studies, the study of thyself. False ideas here are commonly formed, and always are they productive of evil. Know your true value, and do not cast yourself away on trifles : know your true value, and do not arrogantly assume rights, or regards, or honours, which are not due ; which will not be yielded ; not, however, without a contest ; and that, possibly, of more injury than the acquisition can be gain.

Such knowledge will tend to give the powers of judgment beneficial exercise. To see, is sometimes to be deceived, if we do not accustom ourselves to examine, to compare, to weigh. Whatever we contemplate judiciously, becomes in its turn the means of rectifying our notions

on some following case. The liability to imposition is small while the mind is thus exercised. He who wishes not to be deceived, should set himself purposely to examine and form his judgments ; not hastily, at a glance, but with care and due consideration. Do not suffer yourself, therefore, to be hurried by temper, or volatility, or carelessness, into erroneous estimates. Cultivate the power of judging accurately ; it requires great attention, but it is of absolute necessity, and well repays the man for all the labour which the youth endured to attain it. Cultivate, too, the powers of memory ; that is, on principle store it with ideas of value ; on principle refuse to glut it with error, trash, and ribaldry. What is observed worthy of notice should be well imprinted, and frequently recollected. The habit will grow ; and every fresh attainment in knowledge, whether by reading or by observation, will give occasion to the intelligent to correct former misapprehensions ; to recollect what of a similar nature was known before ; perhaps by the comparison of these together, to elicit some new idea.

Nor neglect what may delight and rectify. Prompt, and yet restrain, the excursive, wild, or if rightly governed, almost creative powers of the imagination. On principle resist those day-dreams in which the young are delighted to indulge : dreams of honour, wealth, and happiness, which never can be realized ; the relish of which, however, sometimes renders insipid the best enjoyments of actual life. The appetite for novels, if indulged, leads much to this deception, and is one of its principal evils. Yet do not refuse the polish, the refinement, given to the taste and feelings by the best poetry, and those works of literature in which the human mind ranges beyond plain matter of fact. Not to have the imagination a little warmed and elevated, is to run the danger of being a mere plodder. Yet on principle, let not the dose be too abundant ; lest the bewitching occupation trench upon the time and feelings due to more important and necessary engagements.

Let none of these powers be attended to at random, and as mere caprice or pleasure may incline ; but let it be a matter of thought and due consideration, to be every

day learning something. Storing the memory with important ideas, indulging or restraining the contemplative mood, and aiming to inform and rectify the judgment by whatever occurs. Rejecting trifles will give a dignity to the feelings, and tend to raise the character of the mind above frivolity : grasping at whatever is new, curious, important, and excellent, will in time have admirable effect. The man will show the vast difference ; will feel it himself ; will be found out by the intelligent, nay by the careless too, who will wonder awhile, and then sink again into their growing inanity.

If this attentive care be due to the mind itself, similar reasons will require that principle should be rigorously applied to those exertions of mind which we call talents. The care requisite to educate the intellect, is indeed in order that all its operations should be honourable and efficient.

Already has it been stated, how important it is, that on principle these talents should be trained and urged to eminence : scorn to let them lie by rusting : seize the high gratification of their free, strenuous, and successful exertion. What powers

we may possess, it is not in our choice to determine : but what use we make of them is our grand concern : and hence our accountability eventually will rise.

In order that this account may be satisfactorily rendered ; whether to our own consciousness, or to the solemn enquiries of a coming day, it will be needful for us to select those talents which are most proper for our cultivation ; most worthy to be brought forward into actual use. Our probable destination in life will, in general, point out which is most appropriate ; may put the compulsion of necessity upon some of them. Let not the heart revolt from what the judgment recommends. The inconsiderate may say, " Oh, how I hate it !" principle, if consulted, will say, " That which Providence has made your duty, should be cheerfully chosen, and sedulously cultivated." Refusals of this nature, are not uncommon. The beginning of ruin to many a man of great ability, may often be traced to indulging a dislike against those very talents by which he might have risen to eminence ; and the consequent cultivation, perhaps overstrained attention to other talents, which, however amusing,

could not be beneficial ; or which, however useful to other persons in other stations, could not be suitable to him.

Much resolution, if we considerately act, will be found needful in many instances where the repressing useless talents becomes our duty. Talents which may yield us considerable gratification, may yet be better restrained ; as the indulgence may take up too much of our time, occasion needless and inconvenient expence, or even deteriorate our character. There are amusements innocent enough, which do not suit a serious age, or a serious station. The games of idle childhood, do not become the active steady youth. "You ought to be ashamed to play so well on the flute," said a prince to his son ;—more important studies called for attentions, which by that acquirement were absorbed. The reasoning may be applied to every station of life. The useless application of talents, has been the source of regret in after life to many a one, when the opportunity of doing better was lost for ever.

If the indulgence in useless attainments may be matter of regret, and should be

therefore carefully guarded against, how important are the cautions directed against the indulgence, nay, the very attainment, of such as are dangerous ? Take one instance, among many : let no one take pains to imitate hand-writing, lest it should become a temptation in some hour of difficulty, to an act of forgery. The term, the dreadful suspicion is shocking to our feelings. Let the horror operate to keep us from whatever might lead thereto : to be unable to perpetrate some crimes, is a happy defence against the tempting opportunity, and the pressing solicitation.

When useless and dangerous talents are given up, time and energy will be obtained for the better attention to such as judgment shall determine on, as most worthy our choice. The same principle will be found of excellent service in many an after season ; when real obstacles, or *ennui*, shall endanger our perseverance. If talents are ever so powerful, they must inevitably fail of effect, if not continued in exertion through the requisite period. He who winds at the well, must not remit till the bucket reaches the top, and he grasp it firm in his hand : it is much easier to

set out, than to hold out : yet the latter is as absolutely necessary as the former. Certain of many temptations to remit our energies, we shall find a steady principle of action to be of no little importance to our eventual success.

More important than at first naming may appear, is the cultivation of manners : which should to a youth become on principle a daily care. The young are apt to slight this. Full of spirits, they become boisterous ; fresh from school, they retain a love for manual jokes, and wit that is nearly allied to mischief. We make some allowance for youth ; but that conduct which requires allowance to be made, is confessedly not proper. We advise the young to repress every impropriety with the greatest care. They have to learn the usual forms customary in genteel society ; let them not esteem this burthensome ; let them not withdraw themselves from genteel society in order to escape it. Let a steady regard to what is proper, engage the mind to strict attention on this head : never lose sight of it. The importance else may be felt by some great disadvantage ; because, besides the essential pro-

priety of conducting ourselves with the steadiness, politeness, and deference to others, which become our station ; there is often, in the effect produced, a strong argument to stimulate our attention. Who has not seen that the manners of a gentleman recommended to notice ? If a handsome face is a letter of recommendation, as queen Elizabeth used to say ; the next thing which catches the attention, when we know nothing of internal qualities, is the manner of behaviour. To render this agreeable is in our own power. The formation and beauty of the countenance is not so : or only so far as regards expression, which will be the result in a great degree of the manners indulged. If these are placid, kind, attentive, the features of the face will take a character from the frequent recurrence of those situations, and those forms of the muscular action, by which such feelings are accompanied. Who has not seen, on the contrary, that rough or unpolished manners are very repulsive. Many a worthy character has been hindered in all attempts to attain respectable notice, by something uncouth in behaviour. Many a man of talent is avoided, because too much of a sloven to be

tolerated in a drawing-room : nay, the consciousness of such deficiency will repel a man's own exertions. The fear of not acting rightly, will make him awkward in all his attempts. A few instances of miscarriage on this account, will possibly damp his own energies, and oblige him to recede into the less noticeable ranks ; when, by a little attention to what he has too carelessly deemed trifling accomplishments, he might have claimed the estimation his intellect demanded, and sustained it with equal advantage to himself and others. What is the diamond fit for till it is polished ? let it have its full lustre.

Some customary modes mark a person's rank. One cannot conceive of a gentleman demeaning himself like a person of no education. To spell incorrectly, shews want of culture ; to enter a room boorishly, will give the idea of low life ; vulgarity of manners, will strongly insinuate the notion of vulgarity of station, company, and sentiment. The world may sometimes be mistaken, and judge a person to be a coachman, who is indeed a lord. But seeing the world will have its own opinion, it behoves the young, whose man-

ners are forming, to take especial care in their formation. It behoves those who have to make their way in life, to guard against whatever may hinder their progress ; even should it be so small a circumstance as bowing unlike a gentleman.

Politeness is the counterfeit of real goodness ; or at least is to it as paper currency is to sterling gold ; a representative, and that only : yet both pass in the world. and while no breach is made in credit, one, if not of equal value, is of equal use with the other. Whoever will cultivate true benevolence of heart, and soundness of principle, will never be much at a loss for essential politeness. Customary phrases he may miss ; the graces of polished manners he may not have learned ; these are indeed always worth the learning, because they catch attention ; but the attainment will be easy to him. Offensive impoliteness, is the preferring one's own self, as to opinions and gratifications, to the general accommodation of the company. Goodness of heart wishes to gratify others above itself, and will ever be polite, if not genteel. While the essence of the accomplishment is in every one's power, it is a

pity it should so seldom be found : and it is a pity too, if at any time where the essence of politeness exists, the lustre of genteel polish should be despised or neglected, or be by any means absent.

Pay scrupulous attention, then, to every word, and every gesture. Not only let principle choose what is honourable, just, and eminent ; securing the great and most important objects of life : but let it take cognizance also, as not unworthy its notice, of every lesser matter. When the silk mills at Derby were first erected, although the expensive and complicated machinery was constructed in the most accurate manner, it would not act : it was at last discovered, that the whole stopt for want of a little oil ! This account will describe the real cause of failure in many an ingenious, many a learned, and many a worthy man.

We have glanced at goodness of heart, and in so doing we have hinted at what is far more worthy cultivation than talents of any kind can be.

Good-nature is a natural disposition to

oblige, and often effects the purpose with accuracy and acceptance ; but it is apt too to fail on trying occasions. Good temper is the result of care, repressing the feelings, and training them to correct motion. This, brought into habit by determined principle, is much more likely to be accurate, and is much more to be depended on for permanency ; especially on those occasions which upset untaught good-nature. Adopt then the principle of keeping all the feelings, which might be offensive, under rigorous restraint ; and of accustoming to a ready exertion those kinder sensations, by which man is knit to man ; and services, perhaps important, but always acceptable, are rendered with an ease which gives to them additional value. This kindness of heart, or, if produced by cultivation, this goodness of temper, has been already stated as the essential requisite in politeness ; the root from which it spontaneously grows, the stem by which the flowers and fruit are supported, are kept from trailing, to their defilement perhaps, or at least to their less advantageous appearance. Important in itself, its value is increased by its influence on every feeling, and on every action. Worthy then

of the greater attention ; worthy of the youth's most sedulous care.

The cultivation of the heart is indeed far more important than the most eminent and productive talents. That always succeeds in gaining esteem ; these, frequently fail, especially if unaided by the heart's better feelings. Talents may benefit the owner ; but goodness is an advantage to all around. Talents may brilliantly shine ; but goodness gives that genial warmth which comforts and nourishes wherever it comes. Talents may offend, oppress, and spread devastation ; but goodness becomes a blessing, even when talents are very small ; and a blessing indeed, when great talents are directed and impelled thereby. Let principle then urge you to the diligent cultivation of every virtue. Watch well the disposition, and train every emotion to a regular and beneficial action.

The natural disposition may be much against this amiableness of character ; but principle must, as its first and most important object, examine and amend it. The more untoward it is, the more abso-

lute is the necessity of paying the greater attention to its melioration. If he that restraineth his spirit, is greater than he that taketh a city, as divine wisdom hath stated it ; then is there a road open to true glory, through which every one may press on, with certainty of success. Verdant are the laurels thus won ; unstained with blood ; and durable beyond fame and marble monuments. The historic page will have ceased to endure, when the triumphs of goodness, and its beneficial effects, shall yield satisfaction still, even in an eternal world.

Principle will turn itself to every subject ; nothing is unimportant to it ; nothing but is benefited by it. It is not therefore as if of small importance, that the care of bodily health is put into the latter part of this slight survey. In the pursuit of station, the young, who are now healthy and strong, are apt to think they shall ever be so. In the cultivation of talent, they forget that talent itself must fail, if they undermine those bodily powers by which alone it can be exerted to effect. Many a one has died in the preparation for eminence, which might have been attained, had the voice of moderation been attended to. The

value of health is beyond calculation ; but it is often not estimated as it should be, till the loss of it, perhaps the irreparable loss of it, impresses its importance when too late. All the eagerness with which talent and station are desired, should operate to let restraint be placed upon exertions, when they rise beyond the usual powers. Overwrought intellect gives warning by bodily weaknesses, of the dangers likely to arrive. Let these hints be carefully attended to ; especially by those who are not robust, and who are the very persons most apt to overload their weak frames with inordinate application. Upon principle then, adopt every rule which may secure health ; maintain every habit which conduces to hilarity : cheerfulness, as the result of equal and nimble spirits, is a sort of barometer of health.

It is true, many of these objects are attained by persons who have never thought about them, so seriously, as to make any distinct resolution concerning them. But it is equally true, that if they are of the importance stated, they are worthy of being taken up on principle ; and they are

more likely then to be attained. It cannot be too deeply impressed upon the young, that whatever it is proper to do at all, it is proper to do well. Now the method most conducive to actual and efficient attainment, is this of duly considering on conviction determining, and then with sedulous care pursuing, the objects found to be desirable.

Not merely then as to the main pursuit, let principle regulate your conduct ; but in every case in which action or avoidance become necessary, consider well on which side duty lies. The mind will then be at ease, satisfied of the path chosen ; it will be active, aware of the value of the attainment sought. While desultory and capricious exertions miss many an invaluable benefit, and mar almost every thing they touch : steady regular principle will press forward in the best road, and be first to reach the goal.

The habit of acting thus considerately in more important instances, well persisted in, will spread itself to every minor object. Its own advantages will recommend it, and every exercise of it will make fol-

lowing exertions of a similar nature more easy. The desultory become more and more capricious by habit, till all the powers become useless, ineffective, or baleful : on the contrary, regular habits and principles will give great facility of action ; will attain the result more expeditiously ; and give to the whole character something more of manliness, than can be hoped for without such aid. The very name of acting upon principle, will prepossess the minds of observers, and make them hope well of a person rising to eminence, by steps so firm, so legitimate, so successful.

CHAPTER VI.

ON USING OUR TALENTS.

THERE are cataracts at which we gaze with awe, and inundations which excite horror : there are streams which soon become stagnant, and lose themselves in the sand ; we survey them with regret or disgust : but the river, whether small or great, which glides smoothly along, and spreads fertility wherever it comes, is always contemplated with pleasure. Let your character conform to this idea.

There are many, and those too of very powerful minds, who receive much, but give out nothing. Learning has illuminated their understandings ; science accurately assorted and shaped their perceptions : they know it, and exult in the gratification, as the miser surveys his hoard with an extacy, which, however great, raises in observers rather contempt for its selfishness.

than sympathetic pleasure in its abundance.

Wherever talents are thus hoarded, and become only as lumber in the mind, there must be some fault in the individual's own character ; for the conduct is in itself unnatural. Man is sociable. It is his very nature to intermingle kindnesses. He cannot exist in any comfort alone. The talents of others he expects should therefore be forthcoming for his use, whenever he has occasion : but he does not deserve to receive, who, though he possesses abundance, will not give. Is it indolence, which will not take the trouble of instructing others ? it is no virtue. Does pride of knowledge disdain to stoop to the comprehension of the ignorant ? does impatience turn from their stupid misapprehension with a frown ? does selfishness love to keep all it can gain, as treasure to its own separate joy ? The low notion may be pitied, but cannot be approved, by such as know the luxury of communicating knowledge ; of doing good by talent ; of making many around us comfortable by the discoveries we have made in art or in science ; or the pertinent application of

the discoveries of others, which we have suggested.

Perhaps the recluse grows morose, having none of those endearing connexions which dilate a man's heart, and prepare it by fire-side charities, to spread his benevolence through a neighbourhood. He keeps aloof out of spleen or peevishness ; and answers enquiries by a frown. Or it is mere thoughtlessness, which is so busy in gathering the fruit of knowledge, as not ever to think of bestowing on those not situated so near the fair tree as himself. Nay, should it turn out to be modest timidity, which does not suppose its stores to be abundant ; which fears to discover rather weakness than strength, by venturing at mutual communication : let it be which it may of these principles, to which we trace the hoarding habit, not one of them is praise-worthy. Even the last becomes a vice, when it acts in so injurious a manner. No virtuous feeling will operate to such absorption of knowledge, such paralyzing of powers, which might become widely beneficial. Let the consciously guilty undeceive themselves, and be persuaded that talents are only then honourable, when

they are brought into use ; they are else but splendid badges of infamy, and mark a man as a culprit against society, in a way the more certain, deep, and notorious.

Who can calculate the loss sustained by society by such refusal to act in it, according to a man's natural or acquired capacity ? What wonders have been produced by the exertions of mind ! Had all men of talent been thus unproductive, our world had never risen to knowledge, refinement, comfort, or general happiness. What they knew, if they knew it only to and for themselves, would have perished with them ; and posterity might justly disregard those by whom they were disregarded. Where pride, conscious of superiority, is the hindering motive, such should be told, that the true measure of talent is its usefulness. Not he who has most, but he who does most wish it, stands highest in general estimation. Vanity may swell itself, at the survey of its own stores ; but real greatness arises from the beneficial effects of dispersing as widely as possible to all around us.

That it is more blessed to give than to

receive, is a maxim of wide application. He who hoards does not understand the true way to happiness. He who will not take the trouble of doing good, must lose all the pleasure which benevolence has power to confer. He who lets slip an opportunity, must sooner or later repine at his own loss thereby. Whatever part of his estate a man neglects to cultivate, he will have so much the less to store up. Whatever part of his stores he suffers to lie by improperly, will only rot and perish. A suitable re-action of providence this, to punish such as will not communicate. The very joy thus selfishly indulged, becomes the means of eventual suffering.

Commend me to the hearty soul, who, whatever he has, bids all welcome to partake as far as he is able : whose daily use of his talents is spreading daily benefits on all around him. It is a happiness to live near such a communicative being, and the happiness is in turn heaped upon his own head, when he surveys the good he is doing, or receives the heartfelt thanks of such as are benefited by him. We do not grudge the rich their large possessions when they are bountiful in proportion ; we

rather rejoice that some do possess so much as to be able to spare, and thereby to become public blessings. Not to riches in gold and silver only may this feeling be applied ; it will attach to mental riches also ; and he who has abundance of knowledge will obtain respect and affection in proportion as he makes his knowledge widely useful. Metallic wealth dispersed may supply the body's wants, or gratify its craving appetites ; it will excite grateful feelings in proportion to the benefits conferred. But the dispersion of mental treasure, as its immediate object is the mind, will touch the soul itself the more sensibly, the more deeply. And gratitude for such favour is not excited like that by presenting a gay object for the eye, but like that arising from opening the blind eye itself, and giving power to contemplate a new world.

To have talents, then, includes in the very fact, an imperious duty to use them : to let them lie by, as buried in the earth, is to approach both folly and guilt. When parents, friends, and tutors, exert themselves to communicate instruction ; to form the mind to knowledge, and power, and

adroitness : it is with the direct view of the pupil's acting with these communicated gifts ; acting for his own advantage, and the benefit of others with whom he may be eventually connected. It is an ungrateful return for all the cost, the time, the mental energy, spent in education ; if the youth will not imbibe the knowledge, or will not use it when obtained. Society, which suffers a man to exist, and affords him safety and comforts to make his existence agreeable to him, has in return, claims upon him ; to recompense by his labour, or by his wealth, by his gifts of body or mind. It is his duty to meet these reasonable expectations of society, and repay in some sort the kindnesses received. Nay, common humanity requires that a man, if he knows a remedy for any prevalent and destructive disease, should make it known to all the sufferers ; and, if possible, alleviate the misery they endure. The worst of diseases are those of the mind ; arising from ignorance, prejudice, and error. The best of medicines, therefore, is knowledge. Whoever could rectify an error, or remove a prejudice, by enlightening ignorance with his own superior attainments, is bound to do it by all that

marks him man, and ties him to our common nature. Where a man is backward to cast in his mite to the general treasury, society generally finds it out, and has many ways, appropriate ways, of punishment : they deny in their turn, or grudgingly afford assistances he may want ; and give him to digest at his leisure, the known justice of that rule, which says, "He that will not work, neither let him eat." He will feel in his punishment that he has neglected a duty : he will feel he has neglected a duty to himself, and not to society merely. He ought to seek the enlargement of his own happiness ; but he narrows its dimensions much by neglecting to use those talents which give out comparatively little joy, except in the using. The olive yields its rich oil only to pressure. Much would his talents themselves improve by exercise ; as by nothing does a man himself learn so much as by teaching others : more clearly would he comprehend if he frequently explained his principles ; more adroitly would he perform, if often he exhibited the best mode to others. Many a mistake, which he holds as a truth, might be rectified, would he but bring it to the test of practice, And if he

is at all alive to the pleasure of bestowing, he might, at a cheap rate, become a benefactor, by opening his stores of knowledge : if he is at all capable of loving, or being beloved, he might open many a tributary stream of gratitude by communicating advantages.

The value of such donations would be highly estimated by those who, though ignorant, are aware of the value of knowledge ; and especially of that knowledge which will bring daily additions to their safety or enjoyments.

We are taught to carry the duty higher still, by the recollection that every good gift is of God. When he communicates, he does it on these terms ;—Freely ye have received, freely give. To keep a single talent unused, is highly offensive to him. When the master shall call to account every steward, then, not to have done what good we could, will be found a crime of no small magnitude. Men are apt to say, they may do as they will with their own. Without denying the justice of this rule, we may set aside the propriety of its application, by the single idea, that

nothing which we possess is in this respect our own. "Who made thee to differ? and, what hast thou which thou hast not received?" are questions which bring self to its proper level. He who gave thee what thou hast, will one day inspect narrowly into thy conduct with it. Blessed will they be who have his commendation of "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Great, then, is the moral guilt of hiding our talents. All these considerations prove, that "to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Such as please themselves with the consciousness of doing no one any harm, should first examine, if they do not thus withhold that which might do to many essential good. The guilt of robbery shocks us: but is there no criminality in withholding that knowledge by which poverty might have been removed or softened; and perhaps wealth or competency obtained? The turpitude of murder fills us with horror: yet is he entirely free from it, who hides what might recover the sick; or prevent a bloody strife; or, by instructing, reclaim the brutal murderer from his

deadly purpose. By all the benefit which might probably arise from the proper use of our talents, may be measured the guilt of that indolence, or pride, or whatever it may be, which causes us to keep them in gloomy inactivity, or hide them in selfish indulgence.

Let it, then, be received as an undeniable principle, that whatever talents we possess, ought to be brought into action. To cultivate them, or such of them as opportunity may call for, is a duty which no trivial circumstance can set aside. Such cultivation will greatly tend to their improvement, and will repay us thus for the trouble occasioned by their exertion. Who can tell what discoveries may reward us yet more, or what unthought-of advantages may arise to ourselves, or to our neighbour, by some, perhaps, slight labour, or slighter hint, communicated on the demand of some occasion, important or even trifling. The aim to render such service is honourable, the endeavour very pleasurable, and the success gratifying to our best feelings. While, on the other hand, neglect of cultivation, or of bringing

them into action, is marked by the disapprobation of all the wise and good.

Where indolence is the preventive cause, or pride, or any principle which cannot decently be owned ; a false humility is often resorted to ; and confessions of weak talents, insufficient for any important effect, are made ; in hope of imposing so far as to escape blame, or stop the too painful exhortation. The confession, indeed, may proceed from true humility ; which longs to do good, but fears it is not able. Or it may state an undeniable truth ; and yet in none of these cases is the excuse valid. For the fact is, that mediocrity of talent is often most useful.

If we examine the actual good done in society, we shall find men of no great talent are most commonly the agents. Indeed, if none but highly gifted persons could be useful, the number being small, so must be the advantages which society reaps from talent. Not every man is eminent : not many can be so, in the usual course of things. Only a few, indeed, can be so prominently capable as the objection seems to suppose necessary. Small

would be the chance of improvement to any nation, if it depended on the exertion of superlative abilities. The five-guinea piece has certainly great value : but it is rather hoarded on this account, and is looked at as a curiosity : the impression is beautiful, and the legend full and clear ; but it cannot be brought into use on many occasions. The shilling, with its plain face, with scarcely a letter visible ; by passing too and fro through a thousand hands, becomes the means of procuring the necessaries or comforts of life through a large district. Mediocrity of talent, in the same manner, is often joined with extraordinary activity, and gains power by velocity, though destitute of much influence by weight. Small is that grain, which nevertheless becomes the daily food of man. And humble talents are capable of usefulness to a very important and honourable degree, if they are exerted with faithfulness, activity, and constant operation.

It frequently happens, too, that talents not very high in rank, become of especial use by judicious application. The soldier who, going to battle, stuck a horse-shoe in

his girdle, exclaimed, when a ball hit it, "There ! a very little armour will do, if you do but place it well." If men will, with slight powers, and scanty information, attempt stations of peculiar difficulty and eminence ; it might be a friendly act to whisper in their ear,—you are not competent. But if, even with the lowest degree of ability, we aim at usefulness in some mode within our reach ; we shall not fail of success and reputation. Diligence, care, and faithfulness, will raise any character into esteem. Small seems the capacity needful for a ploughman ; yet wide difference exists among that fraternity : and that difference is made, not so much by superiority of talent, as by greater activity of exertion, and more steady conduct : qualities within the reach of every one, who will take any suitable pains with himself. Qualities these, often especially cultivated by such as are conscious of deficiency in natural or acquired powers ; and always do they find the beneficial influence. The suspicion of weakness, operating thus to exertion, gains strength.

Mediocrity of talent need never become

an excuse for non-exertion, as the meanest will undoubtedly improve by using. It is by slow gradations the highest have risen, and by similar trials may the humblest rise also. Small as are any one's powers, they once were less ; and the same process which has brought them to what they are, will, if continued, increase them still more. He who has learnt to distinguish A from B, may in time discern C also ; and thus obtain the whole alphabet. Adroitness is the offspring of practice, and often well supplies the place of better skill : while the not bringing our powers into action is the ready way to have them all decay. The diligent may overtake the highly gifted, if the latter loiters, and the former urges onward.

Even the meanest intellect may have powers beyond its own supposal. "I cannot do it," will never succeed ; but "I will try," often conquers. Let no one lazily lie down, and say he can do nothing, till he has at any rate put his capacity fairly to the proof ; lest he be found deficient to himself, and guilty of neglect of duty.

• Mediocrity may with the greater propriety and hope exert itself, as the usual occasions of mankind do not require very high talent to be exerted. Common good sense will suffice to advise in most cases : there is no need of deep casuistry. The plain principle of "do as you would be done by," will guide a man generally clear of flagrant evil. Such knowledge as common life requires is easily picked up. Customary education, and some observation of life, will render any one adequate to the exertions likely to be required of him. True, every man is not a Hercules ; but neither is herculean strength very often wanted : common healthiness gives sufficient powers for common occupations. Where one person fails for want of capacity, a hundred fail for want of exertion. To try, is most commonly the way to succeed : and all that is requisite beyond the known powers already acquired. Try, therefore : your abilities are equal to something ; may perhaps become much greater, stronger, and more efficient, by regular and active employment. To be still, when you might possibly be active, is unworthy in a rational, is unsafe in an accountable creature.

As the common concerns of mankind do not call for remarkable talent, he who is desirous of becoming useful, will not fail to obtain the opportunity. Great occasions do not frequently occur ; uncommon powers, therefore, are not frequently called for ; nor, indeed, could they be put to use, if ever so ready for action. Where one general is required, ten thousand common soldiers will be needful. To rule a nation, is not expected from you ; to govern yourself is perhaps the grand duty requisite ; or, at most, to add to that the common care which may faithfully overlook some contracted spot, or adroitly execute some humble occupation. He who possesses talents of middling power or cultivation, possesses exactly what is most wanted ; wanted, that is, in all the situations which appear around him, or to which he is likely to be called. New discoveries are not needful in most cases, but diligent application of power and principles already well ascertained. All that is needed, therefore, to make talents of mediocrity efficient, lies within every one's reach, if so disposed.

Now this happens exceedingly well, for it is only to this height that the generality can rise ; and there are few, very

few indeed, who are not gifted by nature sufficiently for the more customary purposes of life. All that is wanted, is the disposition to put these gifts to their proper use. Now and then, only, is a Columbus wanted : when he has shown the track, common sailors can cross the ocean, and find out with ease the new world, which at so much hazard he discovered. There is not room for many mountains in any district ; a few to furnish rivers are requisite ; but then it is the low valley which is most productive. The mountain torrent is seized by the hand of labour, is tamed, led among the furrows ; and while prevented from becoming a devastation, is taught to rouse fertility, and bear gently along the rich produce to its destined mart. A thousand lowly artizans profit thus by one philosopher's deep researches. Common rate abilities are all that can be brought into action in the usual course of things, and these common abilities are found every where. Let those who would excuse themselves on this ground be convinced their excuse is insufficient, is fallacious. Do not, therefore, envy high talents, where you see them performing wonders ; but put your own forward to

strenuous action. Who can tell but in time you may rise to equal eminence ; or what shall hinder your being yet more useful in a plain way, though not in one so brilliant ? Brilliancy may, indeed, flatter pride ; but usefulness gratifies much more honourable feelings. The consciousness of aiming to do our utmost, yields a pleasure which the indolent can never enjoy ; a delight which the proud may envy. And the hope that, with plain good sense, happiness has been diffused ; that diligent exertion has made many a blessing grow, where else it had never come ; will soothe the feelings to repose, when those who lie on a couch much more splendid, toss with feverish anxiety, or fret with dreary watchfulness. Let mediocrity no longer hide itself, nor fear to succeed in much that is useful, honourable, and worthy the intellectual mind.

When the duty of using our talents is under consideration, we should take a wider range than may at first sight appear to be needful. Whatever may be the presumed destination of a youth, there are certain sorts of knowledge appropriate to that specific situation. These, it will be

readily owned, ought with great care to be cultivated. But the circumstances which turn up in life, are often very different from what parents intended, or the youth supposed. These will bring into situations where talents not thought of will become most useful, perhaps absolutely necessary. Could we absolutely foresee what would happen, we could with greater certainty provide against, not only the direct plan, but also the contingencies of life. But as our foresight does not reach to such distance, and especially to the sudden turns, or rectangular contortions of our coming path; our only substitute is to provide knowledge, as far as possible suited to every occasion.

Indeed, should our occupation be, and continue, exactly as previous plan and preparation had supposed, yet will it not be wise to restrain the cultivation of our faculties to the narrow allotment which such a situation may happen to require. He that is not intended to be a carpenter, may find it of great importance to be able to drive a nail. Secondary opportunities will often bring into requisition, talents which our primary concern does not exer-

cise. The advantage of being able to answer such demands is not small. Our own pleasure and accommodation, may much depend on an ability which in early youth we never thought of: nay, our safety may sometimes be connected with our adroitness, in matters seemingly out of our way. It may save us from much imposition, to know the general principles of some mechanic arts; the designing may fear to lay snares for us, if they think science has opened to us even some of her less recondite secrets. Not to add, that our general reputation (a matter of no small consequence) will be more firmly established, by our abilities being forthcoming in a variety of useful, or even of entertaining circumstances. Reputation is power, and knowledge gives it well. We might say, that a sort of disgrace attaches, in these days of mental cultivation, to many instances of ignorance, or inexpertness, in things which yet form no part of our principal occupation; nor mingle in the least with our moral qualities. Such deficiencies betray either a want of liberal education, or a negligence on our own part, by no means honourable. It may even be no crime not to know some things, but it is

best not to be obliged to make the confession. Such as do know the point in question, may else (justly or unjustly) begin to despise our better and more important acquaintance with superior matters. The discovery of not being able to do things which lie quite out of our way, need not fill us with shame, it is true ; but to avoid the appearance of such deficiency, by a little adroitness, will save us from many a sneer ; and will yield to ourselves frequent satisfaction.

We cannot even tell of what use to our principal object, some lesser knowledge may be. Those who, at immense labour, had almost raised at Rome one of the Egyptian obelisks, were upon the point of giving it up as impossible ; the powers of their machinery being stretched to the utmost. An English sailor, whose curiosity led him to watch their movements, perceiving them quite at a loss cried out, "Why don't you mop the ropes?" The thing was done, and brought the obelisk presently to its perpendicular position. The method was familiar to him, but the engineer for want of knowing it, had nearly missed of his object ; and, perhaps, lost

his reputation. We are gone beyond the times which confined the farmer to the manual dexterity of the plough, or the hereditary knowledge of soils and seeds. The enlightened agriculture of the present day, draws much assistance from mechanics, botany, and chemistry. A counsellor may ruin a good cause, if his knowledge is merely of law. And a divine, with all his divinity, may misconceive a sacred metaphor, unless he mingle general knowledge in a variety of forms, with his more appropriate studies.

The wisest course, therefore, for the young especially, is to cultivate every talent, and explore every corner of science, as far as their opportunities enable them so to do. To miss the sight of some ingenious experiment, to continue ignorant of what machinery within our reach can effect; is, perhaps, to bring ourselves into desperate want, which that piece of knowledge, and that alone, could supply. That voluntary ignorance, will be severely, but justly punished, in such case. Curiosity, the insatiable curiosity of youth, seems to be implanted in our nature, in order, by the knowledge it picks up, to guard us

against the evils of ignorance, and to provide us with means of advantage in our future years. Not to gratify it in all lawful cases, is to do ourselves much injury. While to cultivate it, will bring us acquainted with a thousand things, affording much gratification in the acquirement of the knowledge at the time; and yielding us possibly, in some future unexpected situation, comfort, or honour, or profit, or safety. "I don't want to learn this, or that," says the thoughtless child; and all the persuasions of parents and tutors are urged in vain. Frivolity, or obstinacy, do not learn. But nothing can be more hurtful than the indulgence of such voluntary ignorance. "What shall I ever want with it," is the common-place reasoning of fools. Our not being able to say how exactly we may want to use it, should never be suffered to prevent our strenuous endeavours to attain every species of honourable knowledge, which comes in our way. Our not being able to foresee what we shall want, ought to stimulate us rather to store our minds with every sort of information. The very things we now neglect, or despise, may happen to be the ve-

ry things of which we may eventually stand most in need.

There is this advantage attending the general cultivation of our intellectual powers, that we shall then be able to turn ourselves any way. Were it possible, for instance, that any one mind could embrace every sort of knowledge, such a man might accept of any situation, and shine wherever he were placed. Although this, strictly speaking, is not to be expected, yet the nearer we come to it by general knowledge, the more able shall we be to take whatever opportunity may offer to our preference. The necessity of plodding on, in some path which may be unsuitable to health, or natural inclination, or altering prospect, has confined many a one, and his specific skill has in a sense ruined him for life. A little smattering of other things had been an unspeakable advantage. However proper, therefore, it may be to cultivate some specific talent, as suited to our probable circumstances; it is wise to add thereto such information as may be within our reach on every other topic. This sort of additional knowledge, may be gained too, without hindering the

main concern. Idle hours spent in such pursuits, will well repay. Many a five minutes now utterly lost might be occupied to great advantage by a page of a book, or an amusing experiment ; by listening to rational conversation, or even by thinking a little for one's self.

Let the young, then, use every occasion for obtaining knowledge ; and seize every opportunity with avidity, which promises to show something new, important, or ingenious. Not a solitary walk will to such an enquiring mind be barren of pleasure, because it will be prolific of improvement. No mechanic at his daily labour will be despised ; for something may be learned of him, worth the knowing, either now or at some future opportunity. The company of men of science, and literature, will be diligently sought, and men of that description will in general eagerly meet the enquiries of inquisitive youth. " Let me try," may produce a laugh at awkwardness at first ; but repeated trials may give sufficient insight into the method of performance, to guide the recollection and exertion of future years,

If there is any case in which the proverb holds good, that 'a store is no sore,' it is in this of laying up knowledge. Talent once acquired costs nothing, even supposing it may never be brought into actual use. To see a sight, some curiosity of nature, or of art, will give pleasure at the time, in general well worth the cost of beholding; and should no opportunity occur to bring that piece of knowledge into action for twenty years, it may lie by dormant without inconvenience; it will not incommode any other idea; it may assist, but it cannot hinder, the acquisition, or the retaining of any fact, or principle, which may happen to be of more immediate importance. Another and another talent may be acquired, and all may find room in the capacious mind of man; which, rich in its treasures, will be able to assort for future use, or call into immediate action, whatever may best suit the present emergency, while that which is not now wanted, quietly sleeps; or now and then gently moves, but without injury, or burden, or cost, or apprehension of danger; till perhaps some unexpected, unthought-of opportunity, shall make the long-neglected talent of prime importance. Then all the

value which belongs to usefulness, shall at once attach to that species of information, which mere curiosity picked up; which discernment stored in the proper corner; and which intelligence will bring forward; in a manner honourable and effectual.

It is by exercising the powers every way, that the proper character of the intellect, the best allotment of the talents, is ascertained. He who is a mere dunce in every thing belonging to study, may be a genius in something of a more active nature. He who never could have invented, may be best able to use, a piece of machinery. While, on the other hand, the mind which revolts from the manual occupation, may be contemplatively employed, to the great advantage of himself, and of society. There are cases in which a pliant osier suits better than the tough oak. Nay, situations wherein a crooked piece of timber will be most appropriate, and therefore preferable. Nothing but indolence is useless. Nothing but frivolity ought to be given up, as incurable. Let the youth who hears the term booby, whispered around him, rouse himself to consider what employment inte-

rests him most. Let him apply diligently to something (and there always is something) he best likes to do; and he will soon silence the sarcasm, by being able to show what will be worth regarding. He will in time do that which shall redeem his character, and give him the honour of usefulness, by some unthought-of application of talent, hitherto hid as under a napkin.

Great is the pleasure in store for him, who by diligent cultivation, and ready use of the talents allotted him, is furnished with ability to meet every rising occasion. Occurrences, of greater or of lesser importance, are almost daily taking place, which call upon the ingenious, the expert, to exert themselves in ways of which they had no previous expectation. Occurrences, which yield to such the most exquisite pleasure, that of performing well what is needful to be done; of doing that which stupidity or indolence are unable to perform; of doing effectively, that which but for some recollected fact, or long disused knack, they also must have failed in. Happy are their own sensations, by such unexpected opportunities of doing service

to others ; and spreading happiness beyond the usual track of their own occupation.

As rises into high estimation the honourable use of our talents ; so sinks, basely sinks, the character which perversely abuses powers of so much influence. If to neglect our intellectual capacities is a crime, how much more criminal is it to pervert them : to turn that to deleterious poison, which was intended for food ? This is not unfrequently the case, when passion rather than reason guides, or rather goads the exertions. Let pride marshal our powers, it shall be to some contest, base in principle, and hurtful in influence. Pride of intellect, debases that very intellect, noble as it may be, by the haughty, or vain, or overbearing character it generates. Pride of pomp, obliges mental capacities to stoop to very mean and disreputable employ, in order to maintain splendour : independence, justice, honesty, are sacrificed without compunction, and as matter of course. Never let the mind lose its proper feeling and character, by a perversion so base.

When frolic sports with others' feelings, much wit may be shown ; but how ignoble an abuse of talent it is to give pain ! A joke which rends open a half-closed wound, and makes it bleed again ; is cruelty, not fun. A sarcasm which shall set friends at variance ; a playing off a poor unsuspecting wight, to the exposure of his weaknesses ; a tale which can raise a painful blush on the cheek of defenceless beauty ; or rouse precosity in the happy ignorance of childhood ;—these are feats in character for demons. The man who employs his talents thus may laugh ; but it is the joy of a madman, who casts about fire-brands, arrows, and death, and says, am not I in sport ? Better far is imbecility than such talent. Better moping melancholy, which only injures itself, than such pestiferous mirth. But if, descending still deeper in depravity, if absolute mischief should be the direct object of perverted powers ; how base is the character so marked ! Thief, murderer, incendiary ; are dreadful titles ; but they fit many a man who still keeps within the letter of the law. The power of tormenting is exercised deeply, although torture is banished from our criminal code. Dreadful is

the power when thus perverted ; and the gratification it yields, shews to how base a degree the mind can be contaminated. Surely no one with the ingenuousness of youth about him, can train himself purposely to such diabolical eminence. But let such as are conscious of strong powers, be much on their guard lest some moment of provocation tempt to indulgence, and that indulgence open the way to future irruption of the baser passions ; till the habit become inveterate, and the whole character corrosively corrupt.

The abuses of talent appear in a great variety of shapes. To trace them, however hideous the appearances exhibited, is sometimes to point out means of evil to those whose wish is to cultivate the mischievous propensity. Such as desire to avoid any perversion of this nature, may easily ascertain what bounds to place to their indulgence, by examining whether harm or good to those around, is likely to be the result. Base is the murky delight, if delight can be applied to the gratification of an injurious propensity. And let it ever be recollected, that all such abuses recoil, sooner or later, on a man's

self; and become, in this world, or in the next, a never-dying worm.

As it is the idle hand, in general, which is apt to mischief; the best preventative of the abuse of talents (after right principle) is the constant and honourable use of them. He who keeps steadily to business, is not likely to yield to the instigations of frolic. The mind engaged in beneficial and benevolent exertions, will habitually repress every tendency to mischief. The very occupation is a preservative. The having something else to do, keeps from the doing of evil. While the superior pleasure felt in performing honourable and useful services to mankind, will generate a detestation of every baleful action; and bring on habits of kindness, which will train every feeling to the proper and dignified character, at which a social being ought to aim. Cultivate well the power of doing good, in every mode which has this tendency; be active, constant, and consistent. The abuse of talents will seldom appear, when the benevolent use of them becomes habitual.

It is a pity when a single field lies uncultivated, even on a large estate : but if a mine productive of much wealth exist, entirely neglected, or worked only in an unproductive manner, we account such negligence deeply culpable. Now there is no field, the most prolific, there is no gold-mine, however rich, which is half so productive as mind. Mental talent it is which sets every thing else in motion ; and produces whatever is produced ; for nature does little, and chance can do nothing, unless mental power take up the benefit afforded, and turns it to advantage. Man without this sort of energy is but a brute. Nay, lower ; for destitute of their instinct, his wretchedness accumulates fast upon him, if he will not use his reason. It is the bringing human talent into successive action, to which we owe comforts, elegancies, refinements of every name ; either for body or mind.

Shall a man seek his own gratification and advantage ?—he lawfully may do so. But the only method efficient of his purpose, must be the exertion of his own energies. Others, with all their talents, can contribute little to our pleasure, if we

will not bestir ourselves. Whereas every thing comes within the reach of well directed minds ; or whatever be the large extent of our opportunity, this will make still more of it. And should a small circle circumscribe us, mental energy will render it beautifully perfect, and fill it with comforts and treasures far beyond the idler's expectation. The steady application of talent, even when its degree is not very high, will do much for a man in securing competency ; that satisfactory substitute for riches. Nay, wealth in no small degree, has often flowed in at some opening made in art or in science ; discovered by close thinking, and effected by unremitting diligence. Indeed where such application fails of securing the comforts of life, it will be found in general that the cause was not in want of talent, but in want of conduct. Deviations from principle undermine the best laid foundations ; and paralyze the strongest exertions, in raising the superstructure. Should a man feel the noble ambition of doing good beyond himself, and his own immediate circle, it is impossible to say what great extent he may obtain for his beneficial influence, by well directed talent. Rich in-

deed is the revenue to a man's self, which arises from the contemplation of widespread benefits; dispersed by our own activity, and created by our individual ingenuity, laborious investigation, or even by happy chance, well followed up and improved. Cheaply purchased sometimes is the estimation of nations by such exertion. The daily comfort of the poor, the better views of the rich, or the rectified conduct of the erroneous; repay to a man's best feelings all the cost of his exerted powers; and raise his gratifications to a purity and height equal to the utmost bounds of his ambition. While the tombstone, and the costly mausoleum, are crumbling to dust; the memory of the benefactors to mankind lives and spreads, as spread cultivation to prize, population to enjoy, and literature to record and celebrate.

To be entrusted with a large sum of money, or to be steward to a great estate, does not imply the responsibility which attaches to talent. Precious gift! but bestowed by one who is aware of the value; who will call to account; and who knows

how to punish the idle, the extravagant, and the perverse. Many have found their criminal torpidity visited by failure. Not by want of capacity did their ill success arise ; but by negligence in the use of perhaps superior powers. The recollections of well deserved poverty must be very bitter. To have had opportunity, and neglected it ; to have lost wealth, or even competence, through our own carelessness ; to have brought upon one's self, and possibly on a lovely partner and innocent children, want or disease ; to have reduced them below their fair prospects or original enjoyments, by sloth or perversity ; is surely to prepare for one's own pillow the sharpest thorns. The sufferings of mendicity cannot equal such self-reproach. The gnawing of famine is a trifle, to the corroding of such recollections. In all cases, has the wisdom and goodness of providence connected our comfort and well being with our own exertions : and the wisdom and goodness too, as well as justice, of connecting sorrow, loss, and suffering, with idleness and wilful misapplication of our powers and opportunities, is equally apparent. Let one statement allure us, and the other alarm.

Remorse must pursue such defaulters, from poverty to disease, from disease to death. To have let life slip by, without having done any thing worthy our intellectual being, our powers, our education, our once fair prospect; to be bankrupt of fame, of wealth, of consolation, of life, all at once; to quiver hopeless on the last plank of earthly existence, awaiting the ingulphing surge, is misery indeed: but who is to blame? Could such as negligently use, or corruptly abuse their talents, realize this probable issue, surely it would arouse them to suitable diligence; under the idea of responsibility to their own conscience, to their connexions, to that society from which they have received many favours, and to which they have communicated nothing in return.

But the responsibility of talents bestowed rises higher; even to him who gave our various powers: gave them for usefulness, and said, "Occupy till I come." With sensations of no common acuteness will all the idlers tremble before him. They will find then, that "to him who knew to do good, and did it not, to him it

is sin." To have been sent into the world with high mental powers, which have been suffered to lie by rusty; to have been favoured with choice cultivation, which has been made subservient only to sensual indulgence; will appear to have been sins of no small magnitude. To have hidden our talent in a napkin, unused, will be accounted highly criminal. To have perverted such deposit to our own use, or the injury of others, will be felt to merit the condemnation. "Let him that is unjust be unjust still." Let duty, and interest, and pleasure, and honour, unite to persuade to a diligent, steady, and honourable application of all the talents committed by heaven to our care. A firm conviction of the propriety, the necessity of so acting, will stimulate youth before the languid character is too much set. Will engage such as have any powers of discrimination, to examine whether what they are doing is the best, the utmost, they can do. Will prompt them to give up vain and frivolous pursuits. Will shame them from desultory acting; and will tend to raise them to the dignity of aiming well, and exerting all their energies to attain the honourable object after which they strive.

CHAPTER VII.

SELF-CULTIVATION MAY HOPE FOR DIVINE BLESSING.

THERE is an ancient fable of a man whose waggon was set fast in the mire, instantly praying to Hercules to come and lift it out for him. The statement is, that Hercules did indeed come, but he told him to put his own shoulder to the wheel; for he would not try to help him, till he began in earnest to help himself.

Fables of this nature do well enough to exhibit a moral sentiment when we want to smile: but if one wishes to be serious, and the present occasion imperiously demands it, we may say, on authority quite different from fables, providence rules over all things, rules by assisting our personal exertions. It is the blessing of God which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith. And this blessing has always a connexion with our own endeavours: the hand of the diligent shall bear rule.

Seest thou a man slothful in his business ;
there is more hope of a fool than of him.

There are two mistakes which are extremes to each other, either of them very hurtful to such as incline towards them. One considers the over-ruling power and providence of God as a reason, rather say, as an excuse, for indolence : if God works, and gives as he pleases, I need not work, I may lie still till he chooses to shower down the blessing.—Facts and experience show that such mistake sadly ; they read their folly in their failure. This mode of error is not very likely to allure the young ; the spirit of activity natural to youth, revolts against it. There is more danger from the opposite feeling, which places so much confidence in its own exertions, as to forget that after all, the blessing had need be sought, must indeed be obtained, or no actual success will crown our labours.

The hand of Providence is an unseen hand ; but not on that account the less real, or the less powerful, or the less suited to our daily occasions. “He is on my right hand, though I cannot see him ; and

on my left hand he worketh, though I cannot behold him." To have so powerful, so wise, so gracious an agent on our side, must be an advantage ; even the careless must own this. To have him on the contrary our adversary, must be ruin to us ; the most hardy will eventually feel it so. Were we speaking of the world to come, the statement would scarcely be denied ; it is equally true of the world that now is. And here, though perhaps the statement will not be absolutely questioned, yet is it in great danger of being forgotten. To rouse the mind to a serious attention to this grand principle of success, is the purport of this concluding chapter.

Let it be recollected, that large and beauteous, and well-furnished, as this globe of ours is ; it is rather a laboratory than a storehouse. What we see are not exactly what we want : but materials, and tools, and incitements towards the production of our own enjoyments. He who prepared Eden for man, did not authorize him to lounge, and take his ease there, but " he put him into the garden to dress it and to keep it." There were fruits, and flowers, and shady groves, and sunny

banks, no doubt ; luxurious gratifications to every sense : but these were all of a nature to run wild and spoil if left to themselves ; mind, intellectual mind, was necessary to keep them in proper order, to give them their sweetest beauty, to produce their most gratifying effect, and especially to continue the varied succession for daily occasions, as new days would severally demand.

His plan is still the same. Every individual mind he brings into existence, is placed where little can be obtained by ignorance or torpidity ; but much by skill and labour. That wheat which becomes the substantial food of man, was once a neglected plant, growing wild, and scattering vainly its starveling seeds to the wind. Was it not now selected, carefully sown, defended, fostered, cleaned ; it would still be almost useless, except to the birds whose instinct prompts them incessantly to seek it. The spreading tree may afford a shelter by its shady branches, to a few naked Indians ; but not a degree above the savage in mentality, will be content with it thus. Cut down, squared into timber, sawn into planks, planed, cut into

mouldings ; it may form a habitation quite of another kind, which shall be more comfortable, secure, and certain. And why ? because mind has operated on the material, and much encreased thereby its value and its usefulness.

That mis-shapen, dirty, useless lump, throw it away, says ignorance ; no, says science, that is a mass of ore : by fire, by water, by hammering, by sifting, by melting, by shaping ; we shall obtain the bar of iron, the workman's tool, the almost diamond-like brightness of polished steel. Our fruit-trees must be sown, and planted, and grafted, and pruned, or no delicious fruits will be obtained. Those who grudge the labour, deserve to have crab-apples, sloes, or blackberries, for their *dessert* : these only are the spontaneous productions of poor old England.

We have mighty pretty descriptions given us, of nature and her simple children. Sometimes by the novelist, but more often by those falsifying gentry the poets, who never know how to keep to plain matter of fact : accordingly, it is very fascinating in good rhymes, to have a

vivid picture set before us, of nature, spontaneously providing for her favourite offspring. We are shown them in natural bowers, sleeping away during the dominion of darkness; while the moon-beam flickers on their leafy pillow. Or we trace them plucking from the bending boughs, the luscious mangosteen, the prickly pear, the date, the flaming pomegranate, or the ripe citron. If this picture pleases us, we had better not take a nearer inspection by travelling thither. At least, let us first enquire, what serpents bask upon their sunny banks, or festoon from their o'er-arching mangroves, which ignorance renders them too superstitious to destroy: what locusts sometimes blast all their vegetable hopes to famine; for they have no artificial substitutes stored up: what diseases undermine their health, which they have no skill to repel: or how a mere handful of banditti, subjugated a fine province, because a few darts is the utmost stretch of invention among the natives; or a footpace their greatest speed for flight. In short, wherever nature, simple unassisted nature, rules, there are of course many privations. Where arts are unknown, science uncultivated, commerce

unattended to, there is misery, want, superstition, and every kind of suffering. The earth is, uncultivated, a mere wilderness; the rocks are as barren within, as without; tools, conveniences, and comforts, are not to be found. Dismal is the real prospect of such a country, inhabited by savages, who know not how to improve their advantages, however great. The savage himself, uncultivated as he is, presents a more sorrowful, a more dreary prospect, still. The barrenness of the rocks around him, is a trifle to the utter sterility of his mind, productive of nothing; unless now and then some passion as a volcano burst forth. The tangled bushes, and his involved scarce reasoning mind, resemble each other. The stagnant marsh, from which arises the pestiferous exhalation, exhibits the torpidity of his faculties, preying upon themselves, and doing injury to those around him. What occasions all this folly, want, misery? Here is a mind which does not cultivate itself; and therefore does not cultivate any thing around it.

Such do not hear the voice of Almighty Benevolence, saying, arise and labour.

Bind, and prune, and dig, and sow ; form build, beautify, exalt. Here are around you in rich abundance materials, tools, immense powers of action ; apply them. While you sit still, I shall give you little ; up and be doing. Invent, it shall delight you ; make, it shall be useful to you ; preserve, it shall enrich you another day ; associate, mutual kindness shall make you happy : ye shall cultivate one another ; ye shall do soon by mutual assistance, what by individual exertion no one can ever effect. Let me see fields of golden corn waving : there is a fine vale for them : gather me flocks on those mountains : drain that marsh, it will make the air wholesome : on that knoll assemble a village : teach the hollowed tree to float in that river : catch the fish, allure the birds, drive off the beasts of prey, defend the cattle, educate the children. Activity will bring health ; wants will lead to invention ; inventions will produce accommodation ; accommodation will give leisure ; and leisure, which avoids the fatigue of labour, gives opportunity for thinking. The being who lives idly, lives rebelliously ; contrary to nature's first law and finest feeling : he

must take, as his appropriate punishment, poverty, ignorance, misery, and want.

When the voice that calls to action has been attended to, the same power has given to exertion wonderful success. He who begins to think, is noticed by the mighty mind from whom thinking originates. He who wishes to know, will have, as it were, a still small voice, suggesting to him ways of attaining certainty, or doubts of plans hitherto incautiously adopted: streamlets these from the fountain of all knowledge. He that will TRY, shall find difficulties vanish before him; he shall be assisted in every step; his progress will reward itself. He who giveth man knowledge, delights in giving. His benevolent eye watches over the laborious, and his beneficent hand scatters rewards in their way. His morning sun rouses to new life daily. Man, if worthy the name, man goeth forth to his labour: and while the idle, though ever dozing, cannot rest, he makes the sleep of the labouring man to be sweet.

That many men, and among them some of the most ingenious, have invented and laboured, and effected wonders, at which

after ages are astonished, without any reference to that God who giveth wisdom ; is too true. Yet this does not prove that he had no concern in their success. Cyrus he guided, though Cyrus knew him not. Nebuchadnezzar he employed on his errand, although "he thinketh not so." This may be said of every useful purpose, or performance ; he that teacheth man knowledge, doth not he know ? Men are apt to burn incense to their own net : they love to say, as he just mentioned, "is not this great Babylon which I have built !" he paid for his folly, however, by being driven among wild beasts, mad, till he learned that the heavens do rule. What the intelligent lose by similar impiety, who can say ; but we know of the author of good, that he giveth more to the humble, while the proud he sendeth empty away.

If God is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, asking of him is the ready way to obtain. The request for wisdom, put up by Solomon in his youth, was in its nature highly acceptable ; and was answered with an overflowing of goodness, which added to it riches and long life. He expressly claims to have given

specific knowledge to Aholiab and Baza-leel, by whom all the cunning work for the tabernacle was executed. The very skill of the ploughman, much as it seems within a man's own reach, is attributed to him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

If self-cultivation refer greatly to the care of a man's own mind, his passions, and his general temper, then is divine wisdom highly desirable. Get wisdom, get understanding ; she shall lead thee, and keep thee, and exalt thee. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee ; understanding shall keep thee : she shall give to thine head an ornament of grace ; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures. Well may it be so ; for the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh understanding.

Should our notions of divine government be clear and distinct, such as the study of the scriptures give us ; or only vague and partial, such as will cleave to

us, notwithstanding all that neglect of the scriptures which sometimes occurs in education : on any supposition it is evident, that if there is a divine ruler of this world, it must be impossible to prosper against his will. He must be a cypher indeed, if he will suffer his rules to be violated, his principles to be neglected, his gifts to be spurned, his eye to be disregarded and yet bear it all ; nay, suffer richer treasures to be accumulated (so the neglecter of God hopes) ; sweeter enjoyments to be attained (so the rebellious pretend). There may indeed for a while, be an appearance of success, with those who have not God in all their thoughts ; but his hand unseen gradually undermines their tottering fabric, brings across their whole plan something beyond their power to obviate ; or suddenly crushes the whole erection in his wrath.

If there be any thing in youth, especially contrary to his plan ; it is that indolence and carelessness against which these pages are written. "Go labour in my vineyard," is his first, his last, his daily repeated injunction. Compliance with schools and tutors, says, "I go, sir : " but

without self-cultivation no real obedience takes place, no real work is done, no real reward will be obtained.

In vain are excellent talents given, if a youth will not use them ; in vain are admirable opportunities afforded, if carelessness lets them slip by : well may he who gives these advantages, withhold his hand, if he sees that all giving is in vain. Where, on the contrary, all gifts are received with avidity, all opportunities are embraced with thankfulness ; we are warranted by every feeling to hope, that the blessing which makes all effectual will not be withheld.

What we read in the lives of eminent men, shows us they were often within an ace of making very important discoveries, but missed them : while to another the same thing seems to occur by chance. Chance is a silly word instead of Providence. He that sitteth on high, and ruleth all things as he pleases, gives to each one some peculiar talent, or opportunity to display it, crowns labour with success ; so as might mark his interference, if men were either wise, or grateful. In general they are

conscious of their own exertions, and claim all the merit themselves : they are not aware of God's overruling, and neglect or disown him in the business. Is not this the ready way to make him an enemy, and provoke him to disappoint us.

Let us suppose a case, that at an early age a person learns to say, in devout and humble dependence, "My father, thou art the guide of my youth." How fair then is the prospect of safety, honour and success ! The very act of devotion inspires thoughtfulness ; the habit of prayer gives an importance, a dignity to the character. The feelings of religion, when they have a suitable hold on the mind, chase away most of that frivolity so hurtful to youth ; give principle to regulate all actions ; propose a reward, higher far than desultory praise from admiring fools ; afford a balancing well suited to every disappointment ; rouse the elastic mind to recovery, however it may be at times depressed ; and propose higher objects and advantages, should all here absolutely fail.

He therefore who would cultivate his own mind, will be wise if he first begin

with entreating divine assistance. With the blessing of heaven, he will certainly prosper. And who can tell but the blessing of heaven now waits for this very application ?

Many are the arts and sciences yet imperfect ; many are the circumstances in common life which call for emendation. That kind providence which has suggested every beneficial discovery, has still others in store. We shall not err much in our theology, if we suppose the divine mind looking out for such, as by intense self-cultivation seem likely to adopt a suggestion, to carry it into effect, and produce that benefit to his immediate circle, or to wider society, which is its ultimate object. There is room for other Newtons, Howards, Cowpers ; other ——— but I must not mention living characters ; else a long list might be made out of self-cultivated minds, richly blessed of heaven : of the excellent, the pious, the charitable, the ingenious ; men of wisdom, benevolence, energy, perseverance ; whose virtues adorn private life ; whose talents charm the senate ; whose exertions give life and mo-

tion in every direction ; whose plans of kindness are giving a new face to society, are aiming to renovate the world !——

“ Go, and do thou likewise.”

FINIS.

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